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JOSEPH JUMP And His Old Blind Nag



BY PETER PAD

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JOSEPH JUMP

AND HIS OLD BLIND NAG.

By PETER PAD,

Author of "The Shortys Out Fishing," "Sam," "The Funny Four," "Joe Junk the Whaler," "Bob Rollick, the Yankee Notion Drummer," "The Shortys Married and Settled Down," "Bob Rollick; or, What Was he Born For?" "Ebenezer Crow," "Stump; or, Little, but Oh, My!" "Chips and Chin-Chin," "Stuttering Sam," "Tommy Bounce," "Tom, Dick, and the ———," "Shorty; or, Kicked Into Good Luck," "Shorty in Search of His Dad," "Tommy Dodd," "The Shortys' Trip Around the World," "Tumbling Tim," "Boarding-School," "The Shortys Out for Fun," "The Shortys Out Gunning," "The Shortys' Farming," "Behind the Scenes; or, Out With a New York Combination," "Sam Spry, the New York Drummer," "The Shortys' Country Store," Etc.

RATHER a funny title for a story, isn't it? But I don't see how I can make out a better one, since what is to follow has principally to do with Joseph Jump and his equine friend, and perhaps after all there is more in the story than there is in its name.

The main incidents in the life of Joseph Jump transpired from fifteen to twenty years ago, and yet there are many living to-day who remember some of them without doubt.

But without going into any further use of words by way of an introduction, this is how I am going to introduce my hero.

It is rather a pathetic story, and one true from life, which may possibly make it all the more interesting to my readers.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Jump did at one time own a bit of a farm, fairly stocked, from which they managed to get a living—just about that and nothing more to speak of. And yet they were happy and contented, being unambitious people, and having an only child, Joseph, to support beside themselves, they let the sun shine when it would, nor heeded the day of clouds.

This condition of felicity might have lasted until they both died of old age, or until this son Joseph had grown to be a man, had it not been for an old woman with her divining rod.

Know what a divining rod is, don't you?

If you don't I'll tell you. In the first place it is a great humbug.

In the second place it is simply a forked stick of witch hazel, and there are people in the world who believe that this witch hazel or divining rod, if held in the hand of certain persons, will point to hidden minerals in the earth and springs of water.

Well, along came this old woman with her witch hazel stick, which she said had never yet been known to make a mistake, and insisted upon it that there was gold and silver on the little farm of Mr. Jump; in short, that there

was untold wealth beneath the scraggy sods of the few acres of which nobody yet had been mean enough to envy him.

This announcement turned the brains of good Mr. and Mrs. Jump, and from that time forward the cultivation of the little farm was neglected, and nothing was thought of but the gold and silver that the old woman's divining rod had pointed to.

But of course it would not do to let the world know about all this untold wealth, and so they delved and dug all unbeknown to their neighbors.

And yet those neighbors wondered at it, at the change that had come over Mr. and Mrs. Jump. And it finally leaked out that they were digging for something.

Some of them said they were hunting for coal, others that they had probably smelled petroleum, while some would have it that there was undoubtedly lead or iron on the old farm.

But Mr. and Mrs. Jump kept their secret well and visions of great wealth were indulged in between themselves, and even their only son and heir, Joseph, was not allowed to know what was in store for him.

Well, this sort of a thing went on for at least ten years, during which time the little farm was nearly all dug over in quest of its supposed hidden wealth, and even Joseph, when he got old enough to understand that all this digging was not farming, could never exactly understand it.

But when he got older and occasionally heard the neighbors hint that his parents were off their base—that they were neglecting a good living and digging after a shadow—then he began to understand that there was something wrong.

Once or twice he ventured to remonstrate with them, and to laugh at the idea of there being anything more valuable than sorrel and sand on the farm, but he was frowned into silence and made to work in the garden to raise grub enough to keep them all while the old folks dug after gold.

But finally this thing came to an end.

Old man Jump up and died.

Died and never struck paying earth.

In fact, it took nearly all there was left on the place to bury him.

And six weeks afterward the old lady sort of weakened on this world's attractions, and so she pegged out also.

The neighbors came to sympathize with Joe, and to help bury his only remaining parent.

And the poor boy, now about sixteen years of age, was indeed a subject for sympathy, for it was generally known that the old folks had gone so far with their craze that the farm was mortgaged for all it was worth, and that there wasn't stock enough left on it to support a crow.

But Joseph Jump had a stout heart, and although he was not long in finding out that there would be nothing left for him after mortgages and creditors had been satisfied, yet he made up his mind not to leave his birthplace until he was obliged to do so.

But the creditors came, and everything of value about the place was sold to satisfy them, until at last there was nothing left but an old blind horse, so old and comically homely that nobody would take him for a gift.

And this was all there was left for Joe Jump—a poor old blind nag.

Some people laughed and others sighed at the forlorn fate of the youth, with the old horse as his only patrimony, and only that because the old beast was so worthless that he could not boast of a pair of shoes and a whole hide.

And Joseph surveyed the situation much in the same light that the neighbors did.

But although some of them thought he would have to apply to the town for assistance, he looked at things in a different light—in the light of philosophy.

Young as he was, he knew that his parents had made a great mistake for some reason or other, but he understood also that all mistakes are buried in the grave, and so he found no fault.

There he was, and there was no help for it.

But he was young and strong, and he could yet make his way in the world; but not in that neighborhood; no—no! He would seek some other place and become something and somebody.

So he packed up his scanty earthly goods in a cotton handkerchief and prepared to quit the place of his birth forever. It was no longer a home for him, although in the little church-yard, not far away, slept his parents who had left him in such a sad plight.

But he had no hard feelings—no misgivings, and was about to turn his back upon the old home of his childhood, when the neighing of the old blind nag startled him.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed; "I was forgetting the poor old horse—all there is left that was once owned by father and mother. But what shall I do with him? He is old, blind and played out. Nobody will take him for a gift. The crows are even now hovering about the place, waiting anxiously for him to die. It seems too bad.

"How often have I ridden him when I was a little boy, and how fond he always seemed of me before he went blind. No, the crows shall not have him. Where are you, Bob?" he called, and started back in search of him.

The old nag seemed to know that everything had gone wrong, and that he was about to be left alone, and the ominous cawing of the crows appeared to arouse him for a last effort.

So when Joseph called him he gave another whinny of grateful recognition, and advanced toward him cautiously.

"Bob, old fellow, I will not leave you," said he, patting the old horse affectionately. "We will go together. There is no home here for us any longer, but we may find one somewhere else. The crows shall not have you, at least not just yet. We will go out and take our chances together, old fellow," said he, and the poor old horse turned his sightless eyes upon him as though he understood the generous sentiments.

It was a comical picture in spite of the pathos accompanying it.

Neither of them was handsome, but Joseph was young, at all events. One of them was comically homely in his age, the other nearly as much so in the awkwardness of his youth.

Neither had a home, both being outcasts, and it is no wonder that there was a bond of sympathy between them.

"Come, Bob, let us get out of this. Any other place in the world is quite as good; and if we don't find fresh pastures and running brooks, we'll at least manage to grub along somehow. Come," and he reached for the old nag's halter.

The old creature uttered a low, glad whinny as he felt Joe take the halter, and he followed the lead with quite a brisk walk, evidently feeling that he was not to be left alone to die.

Bob was old and blind, but not entirely useless. If properly fed and handled there was considerable work in the old nag yet.

But in this way my hero, Joseph Jump, set out to make his way in the world.

He had a stout body and heart, but after what had befallen him in his old home, he felt that it would be even stouter almost anywhere else.

He had received a fair education while his parents were dreaming and delving, for, to tell the truth, they preferred having him out of the way somewhere, so that they could proceed with their search for hidden wealth entirely unmolested.

So Joseph and Bob plodded onward over the country road for several miles, stopping only once at a brookside by the way for water, and while the old horse gladly browsed the luxuriant grass that grew near the brink, Joe helped himself to some apples that he found in a pasture near by.

Again refreshed they continued their way until they reached a farm-house. Joe felt very much like asking for a bite to eat, for Bob had fared much the best since they started, and he was on the point of doing so when the farmer came out and hailed him good-naturedly.

"Hello, youngster! What's yer name; whar did yer come from and whar yer goin'?" he asked.

"Joseph Jump. Come from the pine ridge and don't know where I am going," he replied, sadly.

"Wal, yer right up an' down, like a sheep's leg, at all events. Jump—Jump? old Jump's son?"

"I used to be, but both father and mother are dead."

"Oh, yes; poor critters! I hearn tell about it. But they oughter have know'd better, for that ole farm warn't rich enough ter grow pig pertaters, let alone havin' gold on it. An' so yer don't know where yer goin' tu, hey?"

"No, sir; I have no idea," replied Joe.

"Wal, what are yer goin' ter du with that old plug?" he asked, turning to Bob.

"Oh, he seemed to want to come along with me, and I thought it would be a shame to leave him there to die for the crows to pick his bones, so I took him along," sighed Joe.

"Wal, that's kinder tender-hearted of yer, it is, b'gosh. But he's no good."

"Well, you might not be if you had been half-starved to death as long as he has. He's old and blind, I know, but there's lots of good work in the old nag yet."

"There is? Wal, he don't look it," said farmer Upton, looking him over.

"No, but I know what he is. How far is it to the next town?"

"'Bout four miles. What are yer goin' there for?"

"I don't know; but I must take chances at doing something for a living."

"Got any money?"

"Not a cent."

"Had anything to eat?"

"Yes—some apples."

"Apples! Why, boy, turn that old nag inter ther pasture there and come inter the house an' get something tu eat. Yes, stay all night, goldarn my buttons!" and the honest old farmer wiped a tear from his eye as he spoke.

"You are very kind, sir, and I will help you with the chores in the morning to pay for it," said Joe, following instructions and turning Bob into more clover than he had known in years.

"That's all right," and he went into the house to tell his good wife all about it, and she in turn took as much interest in the poor lad as he did.

In a few moments Joe was seated at their table, and doing full justice to the remains of a boiled dinner, the best he had tasted in years, while Bob was browsing the tender clover.

And then, in answer to their questions, Joe told them the simple but pathetic story of his life, which interested them greatly and held them until long after candle light. They had heard in a general way of the strange craze that the old witch woman with her forked hazel-stick had brought about, and which terminated so fatally for the lad's parents, but it seemed new and more truthful when they heard it from their son.

And so the evening passed, and then came a good night's rest in a regular old-fashioned feather bed, such a one as Joe had never slept on before, and in whose welcome luxuriousness he was soon lost to all the ills of life.

He was up bright and early the next morning and assisted the farmer with his chores, for he was not only handy and willing, but used to such things. And as for old Bob, he was still grubbing away, although already as full as

a tick, for, blind though he was, he evidently understood that it might be a long time before he struck another such a soft sweet thing.

After breakfast, farmer Upton offered to give Joe a month's work at helping get in the crops, for which he would pay him ten dollars, besides board and grub for his old nag. Joe snapped at the offer and announced himself as ready to go right to work, for ten dollars was more money than he had ever seen in his life, and it seemed to him that he would work a whole year for it.

And Joseph proceeded to make himself solid and popular with farmer Upton and his wife by doing his duty, while old blind Bob put fat between his skin and bones, and would no doubt have become "coltish" had he been enabled to see what he was doing.

One day farmer Upton wanted to drive to the next town, and his own horses being at work in the field, he harnessed up old Bob to see what he could get out of him.

The old blind nag only wanted guiding. He was willing and able to go, and the speed he put on actually astonished the farmer, who thereupon thought that Joseph was right, and that there was something in the old nag yet.

Well, the youngster worked his month faithfully, at the end of which time the farmer's crops were all in, and he had no further use for him.

But the good wife had made over some of the farmer's old clothes for the motherless boy, and when his month was up he not only found himself possessed of more money than he had ever had before in his life, but some comfortable, respectable looking clothes.

"Now, Joseph, you are going, but if you are anywhere around here when the spring work opens next year, come an' see me," said farmer Upton, earnestly.

"Goodness only knows where I shall be then, good farmer Upton, but if I am anywhere near you, I shall be sure to come to you, for here I have had a good home and been treated like a son. So has my poor old blind nag, Bob," said Joseph.

"By the way, Joseph, you had better leave the old nag with me; I will give you ten dollars for him," said the farmer.

"You are very kind, but Bob and I started out in the world together, and I guess we will stick together awhile longer yet, at all events. I should feel lonesome without him, and perhaps he would lose his appetite if it wasn't for me."

"Very well. There is an old bridle in the barn and a blanket that will do for a saddle and to cover him with at night. You may have them in welcome if you will take him along."

"Thank you. We shall never forget you."

And so Joseph placed the bridle on the old nag, strapped the blanket upon his back with an old surcingle, and bidding good-bye to his good friends, mounted the nag and rode away.

Once more they were out on the world together, but Bob was fat and sleek and Joseph had ten dollars in his pocket, all his own. So of course the world looked brighter than it ever did before, and he hardly knew a man so rich that he would have cared to swap places with him.

And old Bob seemed to be feeling first-rate, and he trotted merrily along, depending, of course, upon being guided, making good time until they reached the next town, fifteen miles away.

Inquiring the way to the tavern, he rode boldly up to it, knowing that he had money to pay for entertainment for both man and beast, and as he did so a Yankee tin-peddler, coming from an opposite direction, drove up also.

Yankee-like, he noticed Joseph and his nag, and he had not been there ten minutes before he knew all about them both, and being always ready for a swap or a "dicker," he finally went for our hero.

"Say, yu, young feller, much go in that are ole blind nag o' yurn?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. Once he gets used to the person who is driving him, he's good for four minutes," said Joseph, honestly.

"Git out! What be yu givin' me, young feller?" exclaimed the tin-peddler, staring at him.

"Oh, Bob's good for it!"

"Nonsense! I'll bet he can't go in six."

"Oh, yes, he can! He isn't half so bad as he looks," replied Joseph, laughing pleasantly.

"Wal, if he is, he can't go a mile in twenty minutes, an' I'll bet on it. Say, where'd yu get ther ole crow, anyhow?"

"Oh, I inherited him."

"Inherited him?"

"Yes. Bob'n I were brought up together."

"Wal, I guess Bob had several years the start of yu, young feller."

"Yes, so he did, I expect, but he's a good one yet for all that," replied Joseph.

Now the landlord and several habitues of the place had become interested in this conversation, for this Yankee tin-peddler was well known as a horse-jockey who had gotten the best of more than one person in the village at swapping, and, naturally enough, he had but few friends there.

And they saw him bantering the boy in just the same way as he did others whose horses he wanted to depreciate and get possession of, so they naturally sided with the boy.

"Why don't you bet the youngster?" asked the landlord, with a grin.

"Oh, I wouldn't take advantage of a boy," said the peddler, lighting his pipe. "At the same time, I'll bet fifty dollars he can't go a mile in ten minits," replied the peddler.

"Well, I can't bet, you know, because I have no money to risk," said Joseph. "But I know he can do what I said, and I'll leave it to farmer Upton."

"Farmer Upton?"

"Yes—know him?"

"Wal, yes. Guess I du."

"I've been working for him, and he knows me an' old Bob."

"I know farmer Upton," put in the landlord, "and he's a good one."

"Yes, you are right," said Joseph.

"Wal, that arn't got nuthin' tu du with that old blind nag o' yourn. Want ter bet?"

"No, I can't bet," said Joe.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the landlord. "I'll

bet you ten dollars that the boy can drive his horse inside of a mile in eight minutes."

"I'll du it, landlord, for that'll a little more'n square me for my keep here over night an' what I lost on my last trade."

"All right. We'll have the trial before breakfast to-morrow. It's just a clean mile from the guide-post up at the forks of the road down to the bridge yonder. So that's ail right."

"Yes, I'm satisfied," replied the peddler.

"I've got ten dollars. Needn't I come in and bet five on my horse?" asked Joe, earnestly.

"Of course," said they all but the peddler.

"Wal, say, landlord, what have yu got ter hitch the critter tu?" he asked.

"What's the matter with my sulky?"

"Oh, nothin'."

"Well, will you bet the boy five dollars even?" asked one of the interested spectators.

"Why, yes, in course I will, only I hate tu take a poor boy's money."

"Poor boy! I've got ten dollars," said Joe, now fully aroused and on his metal.

This produced a laugh, naturally, and made Joe friends with every one present.

"Wal, I'll go yer, young feller, just tu show yer how fur off yu be 'bout that hoss. Why, sonny, yu don't know how much a mile is."

"Yes, I guess I do," said Joe, quietly.

"Wal, if yu du, yu're ole hoss don't. But that's all right, my boy. We'll show yu both. Is it all understood, landlord?"

"Yes, we'll have the trial to-morrow morning, and the bet is that he can drive the nag from the guide-post at the forks of the road down to the bridge inside of eight minutes?"

"Yes, that's it, an' I'll give fifty dollars for the ole crow-bait if he can du it in ten," said the peddler, laughing.

And so it was arranged, and after talking it over awhile longer they all retired for the night, determined to be up early in the morning.

And as for Joseph Jump, his heart beat so wildly over the new excitement of his life that it was late before he got to sleep, and even then he dreamed of his old blind nag all night.

But he was used to getting up early, and he was out ahead of the hostler in the morning, and doing his best for Bob, by way of a light breakfast and a good rubbing down, both of which the grateful animal seemed to appreciate.

And the landlord came out to assist him in fitting a harness to Bob, and getting him into the sulky that had not been used for a long time.

These preparations had not gone far when the tin-peddler put in an appearance, as did the other interested ones, and by the time the sun was up everything was ready for the trial.

And Joseph had driven Bob around to the sulky several times, as sort of a preliminary warming, and until the old

blind nag seemed to become interested in the business himself, although it was new to him.

Finally it was agreed that three persons should accompany Joseph to the mile post at the fork of the roads, there to see that he got a fair and square start at seven o'clock precisely, while the landlord, the tin-peddler, and one other were to station themselves at the bridge in order to see that the finish was made in time, their watches having been previously set to agree.

Joe walked the old nag all the way up to the starting point, and at the agreed upon time they gave him the word to go.

"Now, Bob, don't go back on me; let me see what you are made of," said Joe, a moment before the start, and the old horse appeared to understand that something important was required of him.

He didn't "hump himself," but he seemed to hollow his back as Joe drew the lines over him, and to heave those unkempt hoofs of his over the road for all they were worth.

Joe urged him gently and spoke to him in such an appealing manner that it seemed to touch the old nag's heart, and he soon began to almost fly over the dusty road.

Past tree and fence and over the road he went, faster and faster, until it seemed only a minute from the start when the bridge came in sight; but on and on, leaving a cloud of dust behind, until finally, a little inside of four minutes, the old nag dashed over the bridge, blowing a little, it is true, but a winner for all that.

The landlord got so enthusiastic that he threw his old hat up into the air and never thought of it until it had fallen into the stream and been carried quite a ways down.

"Three cheers for old blind Bob!" said he, as Joseph came trotting back past the point he had passed to complete the mile, while the tin-peddler stood with his hands jammed down deep into his pockets, mouth open, watching him.

"How's that?" asked one of the party.

"Come down with that ten," said the landlord.

"And that two," put in another man with whom he had bet the night before.

"And that five, please," added Joe, driving up just in time.

"Goldarn my everlastin' cowhide butes!" said the Yankee, with his eyes fixed on Bob.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked the landlord.

"Matter?"

"Yes."

"Wal, nothin' much, only I got licked. But it beats all nater, it does, by thunder!"

"For once you got left, eh?"

"Left! Wal, I should say so. Here's yer ten dollars; here's yer tew—an' here's yer five," he added, addressing Joseph, who sat proudly in the sulky, waiting for the first money he had ever won in his life.

And he always remembered that day.

"That's all right. But, I say, you can't always say by looking at a frog how far he will jump," said the landlord.

The tin-peddler tried to smile, but the smile was not a very robust one.

He walked around the old blind nag, who was champing

his bit and tossing his head up and down as though understanding what he had done.

"Say, young feller, how'll yu swap hosses with me?" he finally asked.

"Oh, I don't care to swap," said Joe, smiling.

"Oh, but yu *must*," replied the Yankee.

"Must!" exclaimed the landlord.

"Yes. What in thunder does he want of a hoss like that?" he asked.

"Why, to pick up suckers with, same as you want it for," he replied, laughing.

"Oh, he's only a boy."

"All right, but he seems to be a pretty good one, an' so's his hoss," he added, patting the animal on the neck.

"I'll bet he has been a good one in his day," added the man who had won the two dollars.

"Yes, and he's got some of the stuff left in him yet," said the landlord, as they walked back to the tavern, where breakfast was waiting.

"Don't forget that he has."

As for the tin-peddler, he seemed dazed. Never before had he seen anything that stood on four legs that he had been deceived in, but this old blind nag had broken him all up and walked away with all he had made in a week.

And then to think that the boy didn't want to sell the old plug!

He took a closer look at Joe, as though to convince himself that he was not a jockey in disguise. But he looked so innocent with his native smartness that he could not believe it.

He said but little during breakfast, to which they all sat down, but as soon as he had put himself outside of it he went out to the barn to have another look at blind Bob, during which time the landlord gave Joe a few pointers.

"Don't you swap with him unless he gives you at least seventy-five dollars to boot between yours and that old plug of his, for he'd make money hand over fist if he had him."

"Indeed, I don't intend to swap or sell my old blind nag at all," said Joe.

"You don't!" exclaimed the landlord.

"No; Bob and I started out into the world together. He was friendless, and so was I. He has been good luck to me so far, and I will not part with him; for if I did I think my good luck would go with him. Only think how easily he won that five dollars for me!"

"Yes, but he may not always win, sonny."

"I don't expect him to, but I'm going to stick to Bob as long as he has a hoof to stand upon. We will win or lose together," said Joe, earnestly.

"Oh, that's all very fine, only you may never get another so good a chance."

"Well, I don't care. Bob and I are partners for life. He knows me, and will do more for me than for anybody else. I have been used to riding him and playing with him ever since my legs were long enough to hold myself astride of him, and he is my dear old blind Bob yet."

Three or four who stood around drew shorter breaths and turned away.

There was a phase of human nature that they had never seen before.

The idea of a man's being so attached to an old blind nag like that!

They could not understand it.

"How much do I owe you, landlord?" asked Joe, taking out his money, proudly.

"Well, nothing," he drawled.

"Nothing?"

"No. I won ten dollars on your nag, and I guess we are about quits."

"Well, I'm much obliged to you; but I have got a plenty of money," he added.

The landlord and others laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Joe.

"A plenty of money!"

"Yes, fifteen dollars."

"Ah, it may seem like a fortune to you now, but it will not last long."

"All right. I'll chance it," said Joe, and then he walked out toward the barn.

"That boy will make his way in the world," remarked the landlord, looking after him.

"Yes, liable to make a first-class sport," said another of the party.

"More than that. He's a boy of fine feelings."

"Do they count?"

"Always, and don't forget it."

Joseph found the tin-peddler looking over his nag.

"Now look a-here, young feller, I want ter show yu a purty nice piece of hoss-flesh," said he, leading him out where his horse was being curried. "Now there is a good animal, kind, willing, gentle, an' without a blemish. I'll swap because I've got a sort of an itch for that old crow-bait of yurn. I could have some fun with him, that's all. Now, this hoss is just as good for you, an' I'll give yu ten dollars ter bute on the swap."

"Oh, no; not for Joseph, if he knows it."

"What! I'll bet that cussed ole landlord has been balkin' tu yu. But I don't care; I'll say fifteen."

"Oh, no."

"What! I'll kill that landlord. Say twenty?"

"Not this trip."

"Come off! What du yu think yu've got, an' Ethan Allen?" cried the Yankee peddler.

"No, only poor old blind Bob," replied Joe.

"Of course he's blind, an' spavined. Got three ring-bones on his off fore leg. Hoofs all split, an' hasn't had a pair of shoes on in ten years. Five pounds of hoof to pare off each foot at least, an' there's a frog in the nigh fore foot."

"Well, perhaps so," replied Joe, quietly.

"An' he breathes like a hoss that has got glanders. Now I'll tell yu what I'll du. I'll give yu my hoss, sound an' kind, an' twenty-five dollars tu bute. What der yu say tu that?"

"Won't do it. Don't want to swap."

"Don't!" he exclaimed, as though such a thing was scarcely to be believed.

"No, Bob is good enough for me," said Joe.

"Wal, will yu sell him?"

"No."

"What?"

"No good one will sell his friend."

"But this hoss of mine is fast, kind and worth five times as much as yourn. But I want tu have some fun."

"So do I."

"But yu can have fun with this hoss. He's ther gentlest critter on arth. Maybe not quite so fast as yourn, but solid all the time. All yu've got tu du is tu say go, an' he's off, an' he's good for all day."

"I dare say."

"Wal, I'll give yu thirty dollars tu bute."

"Not this time."

"What! Great goshermighty! what's ther matter with yu, sonny?" he exclaimed.

"Nothing."

"Nothin'! Wal, make it forty?"

"No. I will neither sell or trade Bob. He and I are friends for life. Let that settle it."

"Oh, yu be goshdarned! Yu're ther youngest crank I ever seed," said he, in disgust, at the same time turning away to harness his nag to the peddler-cart.

It seemed to be settled that there was no trade to be worked out of Joseph Jump, and so the out-and-injured Yankee made haste to get away and out upon the road again.

Mounting his rickety old cart, loaded down with bundles of rags, tinware, and a little of everything under the sun, he turned to Joe.

"Sometime yu'll be sorry for this. I've offered yu a big trade. Here's a *first-class* hoss. But all right, yu're a young crank. Git up!" he added.

But the horse didn't appear to want to "git up," and so he shook his head and stood still.

"Git up, confound yu!" he cried again.

Joseph and the others gathered around.

"Git up! What in thunder are ye waitin' for?"

But the old nag only shook his head, and not only refused to git up and git, but refused to answer the owner's question.

"Goldarn yer pelt!" and the irate Yankee stood up on his box and tucked the whip-cord to that balky beast for about five minutes.

But all to no effect. She refused to budge.

"Well, that is rather a nice nag," said Joseph, going up nearer and looking at the beast.

The company laughed, and the peddler got awfully red in the face.

"Good hoss, if you want to stand still all day," suggested the landlord.

"Oh, yu be goldarned! Fact is the hoss knows more'n any of us," said the peddler, getting down from the box and pretending to rearrange certain portions of the harness. "That hoss knows when he isn't harnessed right, an' won't budge a single peg until it is made right. That's ther sort of a horse ter have, young feller," he added, turning to Joseph.

"First-class horse, I have no doubt, sir," replied he, smiling.

"An' yet you won't swap?"

"Not this trip."

"That's 'cause yer a young fool; that's what's the matter with you."

"Perhaps it is, but I can't help it."

"Bahl!" he exclaimed, and once more did he climb upon his box.

He took up the reins carefully and slowly, for he knew the symptoms he had to deal with, and didn't care about being in a hurry.

"Come, King John, old boy, it is time we were off on the road," said he, and he just touched the royal John with his gad.

But Royal John wouldn't have it, or, at least, he wasn't ready to go yet; so he settled back in the breeching and sulked.

By this time the peddler's patience was exhausted, and he went for that balky horse for all his whip was worth.

But he wouldn't go.

That is, he wouldn't go ahead.

But he went backwards far enough to bang the cart against a bee-hive that stood between the tavern and the barn, and tipped it over.

"Thunder and blazes, look out!" cried the landlord as well as others.

"I guess he'll go *now*," said Joseph, "and I guess *I'll* go before those enraged bees begin to get in their fine needle-work."

And he started for the tavern as fast as he could go, Bob in the meantime been put in the stable out of the way.

The others were not slow in following him.

But that wildly enraged Yankee tin-peddler never stopped to think what he had done or to care either. He was bound to whale that balky horse into going ahead or die trying.

He didn't know that he had knocked over a bee-hive.

But the bees knew it.

And they swarmed out to ascertain who and what it was that had ruined their home.

They evidently saw at a glance, and while the enraged peddler was still lashing his balky horse, unheeding any thing else, one of those outraged honey-gatherers lighted on his nose and shoved something red hot into it.

He stopped his whaling for an instant to rub that injured bugle, but while he was doing so another one tickled up his chin.

Another worked his shuttle on his ear, and still another put in a lock-stitch on his lip. In fact, they were all getting in samples of work.

"Thunder and blazes!" he yelled, at length. "Bees! Great Jewhitticer! Git up! Oh, oh, oh!" and yet he had enough to do by this time without walloping the balky horse.

It is not on record that enraged honey bees were ever applied to a balky horse before, but in this case they proved a starter.

The peddler had pulled his hat down over his face as far as he could, and was striking out wildly to fight away the tormenting types of industry.

But there were hundreds yet who had not got their needle work in, and finding no chance on the peddler, they lighted upon that balky horse, dozens of them.

He kicked and jumped for a minute or two, but when about fifty of them had paid their compliments, it became so warm for him that he concluded to move.

And he did.

Dashing wildly through the yard and out upon the road, he was not long in getting in the best speed he ever made in his life, while the peddler held the reins in one hand and with the other fought off the pursuing bees.

Such a shout as followed him!

And the way he went.

John Gilpin was nowhere.

In about one minute he was out of sight down the road.

Going a mile a minute, if a rod, sure.

Oh, it was great sport for them all, especially for our friend Joseph Jump.

But the next thing to do was to pacify the outraged bees, and in order to do this without any more argument than necessary, the landlord put on a rubber coat and gloves, with his face well protected, and thus armored proceeded to set the overturned hive in place again.

This was not wholly satisfactory, but as it was the best that could be done, the bees went to work, probably appointing a committee on damages, and another on cause, and so gradually subsided to the extent of letting people alone who abstained from further molestation.

But that peddler—oh, where was he!

Well, after laughing awhile longer, Joseph called for his horse, expecting to have him brought out as he had ridden him there.

But, to his astonishment and delight, the landlord insisted upon his accepting the old sulky as a present.

"Take it, my boy. It won't bother the nag much, and it's much easier to ride in than it is to go horseback."

"I thank you ever so much," said Joseph.

"That's all right, and if you ever come this way again, give us a call."

"You may depend I will."

Getting into the sulky, Joseph found himself the possessor of quite a respectable turn-out.

He waved his hand to the landlord and his friends, and proudly drew the lines over old Bob.

"Come, old man, we must be going," and the nag started into a brisk trot, knowing who held the reins and having perfect confidence.

They watched him until he was out of sight around the bend of the road.

"We'll hear of that boy again, take my word for it," said the landlord, as he walked back to the bar-room, followed by the others.

"He's a likely chap," remarked one of the party.

"Well, I should say so. And that old blind nag of his is no slouch, either. Wish I owned him. I'd pick up a sucker every day," and after laughing at that for awhile they began to speculate as to the probable whereabouts of the Yankee tin-peddler.

"Wal, b'gosh," suggested one old fellow. "If he is still goin' the same gait he was when he went out of sight down the road, he's probably down ter Springfield by this time."

Springfield was twenty miles away.

And so the incidents of the morning were talked over and after awhile forgotten. We will not follow the tin-peddler at present, our particular business being with our hero, Joseph Jump.

It was indeed a big thing and a fortunate one for him, and during the first few miles of the journey as he continued his way his fresh handsome face wore a broad smile of satisfaction. He was quick to see the comical side of anything, and there was enough in this last adventure of his to keep him laughing for many a day, to say nothing of the substantial profit that it had been to him.

"Bully for you, Bob!" he spoke out, as he rode along. "You are my best friend, and I will be your best friend, old fellow. There's life in you yet, if there is no sight. But you furnish the legs of the co-partnership and I'll furnish the eyes."

The old nag bowed his head as he walked along, just as though agreeing to the proposition.

"But where are we going now, Bob?"

He was silent and thoughtful a moment after asking the question.

"Well, no matter where. The world is before us, and we will make the most of it," said he, and for the next quarter of an hour he rode along happily, but in deep thought.

Where he was going he never stopped to think. Indeed, he scarcely cared.

Another town or village must lay on beyond somewhere, and some time he would reach it. But having money in his purse, and a turn-out that was not to be sneezed at, he was too happy to borrow trouble, and the day was too bright for sorrow.

His way lay along a beautiful highway, bordered on either side by tall trees and fields of waving green. Autumn had long since touched the verdure of the woods, but the hand had been laid on so gently that the trees only blushed, and the fruits turned their russet cheeks thankfully to the sun.

Our hero was taking this all in, when a wild shriek, as of some one in a terrible fright, greeted his ears, and he instantly braced himself up.

What it was he did not know, but he felt that there was something wrong somewhere not far away, and even old Bob pricked up his ears and acted as though he understood the same thing.

But he was not long in doubt, for as he turned a bend in the road he saw a horse and buggy, in which was seated a young lady, coming up the road at a breakneck pace, the wild and irregular pace threatening to dash the vehicle to pieces as it swayed from one side of the road to the other.

"Stop him! Save me!" our hero heard, as the runaway came nearer, and he saw that the lady was wildly clinging to the dashboard for protection.

Joseph took it all in at a glance, and his mind was instantly made up.

Holding Bob with a firm rein, he guided him so as to come close to the runaway, and as he came tearing along, he leaped from his sulky and landed squarely astride of the mad and terrified horse, at the same time calling to his own horse to stop.

Seizing the bridle reins with both hands, he began sawing the bit and calling upon the horse to stop, which he gradually did, after making a wicked fight, Joe proving himself a splendid horseman.

As soon as he had brought the runaway horse to a stand-

still, he leaped down, still holding on to the rein, and gazed at the frightened girl.

"Oh, thank you!" said she. "You have saved my life. Are you hurt?"

"No, not much, I guess. Shook me up a little, but I'm all right. Are you hurt?"

"Oh, no. But what might have happened if you had not stopped him. I lost the reins just before reaching home, and he dashed past the house at the same terrible speed he was going at when you saw us. My folks must have seen me and will soon follow."

While she was saying this in a hysterical manner, Joseph was patting the horse on the neck and quieting him down.

But he noticed that she was a very beautiful young lady, about sixteen years of age, one of the most lovely creatures he had ever seen, and while he held the horse she got out of the buggy and stood in her trembling magnificence by the roadside.

"Oh, you are so good and so brave," said she.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Joe, backing the now subdued animal and turning him around so as to face toward home.

Just then a horse and wagon came tearing around the bend of the road near where Bob had come to a standstill, calmly awaiting the return of his master.

"Oh, there they come; there comes father!" cried the delighted girl. "He will thank you more as you deserve," she added.

"I've been thanked all I deserve already," said Joseph, depreciatingly.

At that moment the anxious father and brother came upon the scene.

"What has happened, Clara, are you hurt?" asked the father, even before he stopped his horse.

"No, this young man saved my life," and she proceeded to give him the particulars of the case, and she did it in glowing colors, much to the disgust of our hero, who thought that quite enough had been said on the subject.

"Young fellow, you are a good one," said the father, seizing Joe by the hand. "What is your name?" he added.

"Joseph Jump."

"Well, you made a good jump when you landed on that critter's back," said he.

"Oh, that's nothing. I am used to horses," replied Joseph, modestly.

"Used to 'em! Wal, by gracious, I should think you was used to the circus business. My name's Allen. I was working in the field when I saw the pesky horse run by with Clara screaming, an' I hitched up like lightning and followed, expecting to find her either killed or badly hurt. And so, Joseph Jump, you have all our thanks, and if you'll ride home with us we'll see what else we can do for you."

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Allen, I don't wish anything for what I have done, but if you'll kindly give Bob a luncheon of oats I'll——"

"Who's Bob?"

"My old blind nag up there."

"Oh, certainly, with pleasure, and a good square feed for yourself. Belong around these parts?"

"No, I don't exactly belong anywhere, only Bob and I belong to each other."

"Come right along, my son, I like you," said the old farmer, heartily.

"And so do I," said his daughter.

The old man glanced at her with a look of inquiry, as though wondering whether she was not just a little too fresh. She had lately come from a fashionable boarding-school, and he had often had occasion to reprove her for her romantic notions, and he instantly thought that it would be just like her to fall head and ears in love with this young tramp, just because he had saved her life perhaps.

Joseph blushed and walked in the direction of where Bob stood waiting for him, while the farmer assisted his pretty daughter into the wagon with her brother, and he took the runaway colt in hand himself.

Bob seemed to recognize the very footstep of his friend and master, for as he approached him he turned his sightless eyes in the direction and uttered a joyful whinny.

"That's all right, Bob, old boy," said Joseph, leaping nimbly into the sulky. "I have earned you a good, square meal of oats. Come," and away jogged the delighted nag, just as though he had understood what had been said to him.

The colt that the girl had been driving was a thoroughly broken one, but, as the old farmer used to say, he was liable to "tantrums," and it was much against his wish that she had taken him for the purpose of driving to the village store.

But they all arrived shortly at the farm-house, and a big, substantial one it was, too, where they were met by the frightened mother, to whom the story was retold, and she not only shook hands with our hero, but insisted upon kissing him.

Joseph blushed some more, and really began to get sick of all the fuss they were making over his little act of bravery. Indeed, they would have pleased him far more if they had put Bob in the barn and stimulated him with oats.

But they were all truly grateful, and not only was Bob taken good care of, but the hero of the affair was given the best the house afforded.

As for the daughter, she insisted upon it that Joseph was a real hero, that jumped right out of the pages of one of "Ouida's" novels, and that she was, of course, nothing less than a heroine.

"Don't talk like a goldarned sap-head," said her father, speaking aside to her. "The boy's a good one, no doubt, but you needn't try to mix him up with any of you romantic, school nonsense."

"Boy! He's a man, every inch of him," said she, with a burst of romantic enthusiasm.

"Wal, see you don't make him blush with any of your nonsense. Here, Sam, go down cellar and draw a pitcher of new cider," he added, turning to his ten-year-old son.

"I'll go," quickly replied the girl, and before anything further could be said she had seized the pitcher and darted for the cellar door.

Meanwhile, the delighted mother, woman like, was asking Joseph all sorts of questions about himself, and before he had half finished his meal she knew his whole history.

Clara returned with the cider and turned out a goblet of it for him, for which he thanked her without, however, looking up, and she hovered about him like a beautiful butterfly.

But she could not catch his eye, because Joseph wasn't used to girls.

"Don't you be so fresh, Clara," said her father to her again, aside.

"Oh, papa, you have got no romance in you at all," she said, with a little pout.

"And I don't want any of the consarned stuff. Common sense is good enough for me, and I guess he likes it the best, if he's as sensible as I think he is," replied the farmer.

"And I don't believe you thank him for his daring act in saving my life."

"Yes, I do, a thousand times, and if he asked a thousand dollars for it, I'd give it to him in a minute. But I don't like nonsense."

"Oh, but it was such a daring act of bravery. There was the colt running at the top of his speed, and I unable to check his mad career, while death hovered over the frantic runaway, staring me in the face, and seemingly prepared to strike, when this brave youth suddenly appears upon the scene, stops his horse, leaps from his vehicle like a harlequin, lands astride the wildly furious steed, seizes the reins that had gone from my paralyzed reach, and, with the strength and daring of an Alexander, curbed him in his mad career, and your daughter was saved."

This she delivered with so much dramatic action, so much rhetorical gush, that the old farmer stood back and looked at her amazed.

Joseph didn't know exactly what she was talking about, for the farmer's wife was buzzing in his ear; but he knew she was gushing over that sensational rescue yet.

"Well, Clara, I didn't look at it in that light before, but maybe you are right," said the farmer.

"I am sure I am, and yet you chide me because I cannot help showing my gratitude."

"Oh, well—that's all right. Only don't slop over," replied he, walking from the room.

"Papa is good, but he has no romance and poetry in his nature," thought she.

Joseph had finished his meal by this time, and was standing where she could get a good look at his handsome face, and this only intensified the romance within her.

She was almost sixteen, handsome as a peach, but boiling over with poetry and romance. She had always wanted to be a heroine ever since she read her first novel. She yearned continually to be rescued from the jaws of death by some handsome hero, and all unsuspected she had been treated to her heart's desire.

It was too much. She wished that her mother would go about her business, as her father had done, and give her a chance to slop over, as the farmer called it, into his ears.

Why should her mother bore him with so many questions regarding his history, when she, the heroine, stood ready to act her part in the proper finale of the drama? Why should she not do as other heroines did in novels when they were rescued from death, and throw herself on the

hungry bosom of the hero, and reward him with the heart and hand he had saved?

It was by this time getting well toward night, and, at the earnest solicitation of the farmer and his wife, Joseph consented to remain there until the next morning, greatly to the delight of the romantic Clara, who at once proceeded to rearrange her bangs, stuff another paper into her bustle, and otherwise to make herself look killing for the especial benefit of Joseph Jump.

But while she was doing this he was out to the barn with her father, looking at its well-filled bins and mows, and envying him more of them than of his poetic daughter.

Farmer Allen found him to be a sensible young fellow, and was sorry that the season was over, but assured him that if he would return in the spring he would give him steady employment, probably thinking that Clara would get all over her nonsense by that time.

Farmer Allen had a Dutchman working for him, and the boy Sam had been telling him all about the sensational rescue of his sister. This of course aroused his curiosity to see the hero, and when Joseph went to the barn with farmer Allen, Hans Smidt was there milking the cows.

"Dot vos some pudy goot dings dot you do mit dot gurl, don'd id?" he asked of Joe.

"I didn't do anything to her. What are you giving me?" said Joe.

"How about dot rundavay?"

"What runaway?"

"About dot horse."

"What horse?"

"Dot colt."

"What colt?"

"Dot colt dot rund away."

"When?"

"Dose afternoon."

"Where?"

"Ub der roat? Vot's der madder mit you?" he added, getting up from his milking-stool and confronting Joe angrily.

"Nothing the matter with me. How are you feeling yourself?"

Joseph was very fond of chaff, but Hans couldn't understand it at all.

"How vos I feelings? I dinks me dot you vos a tame fool," he replied, disgustedly.

"Well, you must be a wild one," and Joe turned away from him cheerily, while that disgusted Dutchman resumed his milking.

Joseph had heard all he cared to about that rescue, and so he gave the chaff in order to choke off any further allusion to it. But Hans couldn't get on to it anyway, so he dropped trying.

That evening was intended to be a very pleasant one in honor of the hero. The rooms were brightly lighted, and there was an air of cheerfulness all over the place. Mrs. Allen and her daughter were dressed in their best, and even the old farmer put on a clean dicky in honor of the occasion.

Three or four of the neighbors were invited, and the story was told over and over again, until Joseph Jump felt

tired and vowed that he would never rescue another maiden from sudden death.

Clara played and sang for all she was worth, and looked unutterable things to Joseph whenever she could catch his eye, and Joseph blushed like a red cabbage, for he didn't know what it meant. It was the first time in his life that a girl ever looked unutterable to him, and he wasn't quite sure but that it was the effect the runaway had upon her.

Finally the neighbors took their leave and the old folks retired to the living-room, just as Clara hoped they would do, and she and Joseph were left alone in the "best room."

Joseph thought the old folks were coming back again after seeing the neighbors away, but Clara knew that her father was sleepy and would probably doze in his chair awhile before retiring, as usual.

And Joseph felt nervous.

But Clara was not. Poetry kept her up.

"Oh, Joseph," said she, approaching and taking a seat by his side on the sofa, "at length there is an opportunity for me to express myself to you in language that other ears might not appreciate, language made only for thanks. Joseph, you saved my life! That life is yours, my king, my hero!"

She had "Ouida" by heart.

Joseph was paralyzed.

He opened his mouth to speak, but could not.

"Take me, Joseph, just as I am. I am yours!"

"I—I——"

He stammered out so much and stuck.

"I am yours with all my wealth, Joseph," and the old song rang in his ears,

"Not for Joe, oh, dear no,
Not for Joseph, if he knows it."

And he wondered if this was what it meant.

"You do not speak to me, my king, my hero! Your eyes do not look into mine! You saved the jewel, but care for it not. Oh, oh! cruel fate!" and she bowed her head in her hands.

"I—I don't know what you mean, Miss Allen," Joseph finally managed to stammer.

"Do you not love the life you saved?"

"Well, I have nothing against you, but——"

"You spurn the jewel that you saved."

"I don't want to spurn anything, but——"

"You do not appreciate me, I understand. You have no developed poetry in your nature. You are brave, but not sympathetic. Love has not yet entered your heart. Adonis, farewell!" and she moved to the other end of the sofa.

"Clara, it's time you was abed," came a voice at the open door. "Come, Joseph, I will show you to your room," said Mrs. Allen.

"Go, the charm is broken!" said Clara, waving him away, dramatically.

Joseph nodded a little, and started to follow the girl's mother up-stairs, never so glad in his life that the thing had happened as it did.

The girl must certainly be off her base, he thought, when left alone.

What the dickens did she mean, anyway?

But he finally came to the conclusion that she wanted to reward him for what he had done by marrying him.

That was a nice way to reward a man.

And so he went to sleep with the old song ringing in his ears—

“Not for Joe, oh, dear no.

Not for Joseph, if he knows it!”

The next morning he was up early, and saw that Bob had a good breakfast, after which he joined the farmer and his wife in taking one himself.

But the romantic Clara was not there.

The charm was evidently broken, and she did not care to again meet a hero who could not appreciate the situation.

But when Bob was harnessed, and Joseph was ready to start, farmer Allen handed him an envelope and told him to open it when he got out on the road. Then, with renewed assurances of their thankfulness, the farmer and his wife shook hands with him, and wished him good-speed on his unknown way.

That envelope contained three crisp ten-dollar notes, and Joseph Jump never felt so rich before in his life, for now he had nearly fifty dollars, all his own.

The whole world seemed bright, and he could not help feeling that he owed it all to his old blind nag, Bob. He was good luck.

He drove to the next village, arriving there about ten o'clock, and guiding his faithful nag under a shed belonging to the tavern, he ordered the hostler to give him some water and blanket him while he waited.

This done, he sought the landlord, and from him obtained a lay of the land, so that he could make sure of where he was going, and in half an hour afterward he was once more in the sulky speeding along.

The country between villages was very thinly settled, and it was quite a rarity to meet a traveler, although an occasional farmer was seen jogging along in a country cart.

Our friend Joseph Jump had no particular place to go to, it will be remembered, and he gave himself up to reflection, while old Bob went along at whatever gait he pleased.

It was during one of these spells of reflection, and while passing along a dreary road where habitations were few and far between, that Joseph was met by a healthy tramp.

He knew he was healthy, because he caught Bob's bit and brought him to a sudden stand-still.

“What do you want?” demanded Joseph.

The tramp regarded him a moment with an unsteady gaze, for he had evidently been drinking.

“I want everything you've got,” said he, thickly.

“The deuce you do!”

“Yes, and no chin about it, either. Get down and come down!” said he, producing a big pistol.

Now Joseph didn't want any holes punctured in his person by bullets, but that tramp evidently meant business, so he got down.

“Shell out! I'm tired of being broke—I'm tired of walkin'. I wan't yer shug an' yer nag.”

“And that would make me tired,” said Joe.

“I don't care. I've been tired for twenty years. Come down!”

“I've got no money.”

“Turn your pockets!”

“I'm a poor boy.”

“That's nothin' ter bein' a poor man. Shell!”

“Are you a robber?”

“No. I'm an adjuster. Adjust!” said he, holding out his dirty big hand.

“No, I won't!”

“Then I shall be under the painful necessity of wasting a good cartridge on you,” and he proceeded to cock his big revolver.

It was the first time that Joseph had ever been confronted by a thing of that kind, and it made him exceedingly nervous. So he produced what money he had, and the tramp grabbed it eagerly.

“Is that all?” he asked.

“All I have in the world,” said Joe, sorrowfully.

“Bah! yer young yet, an' have plenty of time ter get more. No talk back!” he added, springing into the sulky.

“Are you going to take that, too?” asked Joe.

“In course I am. I'm tired of walkin'. Yer a young un. Walk,” and he took up the reins.

“No. I'll fight first,” said he, now fully aroused.

“What!” and he covered him with his revolver. “Don't be sassy, young feller.”

“But you shall not have my horse.”

“Oh, shut up! You weary me,” said the tramp, and he clucked to the nag.

“Don't you go, Bob!” cried Joe, running to the horse's head. “Don't you go.”

“Get out of ther way, or I shall be obliged ter leave yer here for ther crows,” said he, again bringing his pistol to bear upon him.

Joe stepped back, and the tramp again chirruped to the horse, and pulled the lines.

But Bob appeared to understand the situation, and, shaking his head, refused to budge.

“G'long, or I'll whale ther life out o' yer!” and seeing the old nag remain stubborn, he belted him over the haunches with his pistol.

Bob didn't say anything, and of course saw nothing, but he somehow seemed to understand the situation.

Raising his powerful hind legs all of a sudden, he landed them in the stomach of that highwayman tramp, knocking him over backwards out of the sulky, and landing him on his head in the road.

The wind was knocked completely out of him, and he lay there like a log.

Quick as thought Joseph sought the pocket where the rascal had stowed his money, and taking it from him, he caught up the pistol and sprung into the sulky.

Bob instantly responded and sped away like a streak. Joseph turned around after going a dozen rods or so and saw the rascal slowly picking himself up out of the dust of the road.

“Oh, you are tired, eh? Well, you had better sit down and take a rest!” yelled Joseph.

The tramp shook his fist at him, and then began to look around as if to find his pistol.

This caused our friend Joseph to laugh, and the last he saw of that vigorous tramp he was feeling in the pocket where he had placed Joe's money.

And Joseph smiled again.

In fact, the laugh seemed to be almost entirely on his side, for it doesn't seem at all likely that Mr. Tramp felt like indulging in any very extended cachinnations.

"Bully for you, Bob! You have saved me with your heels once more. Good boy!" and he patted him tenderly on his haunches.

Of course it will never be known whether the old blind nag understood what Joseph said, but he acted as though he did.

Indeed, had he been possessed of eyesight, he would probably have been quite as intelligent as one half of the human beings in the world.

But it was a close call and a narrow escape, and now that he was the possessor of a revolver, Joseph concluded that he would contrive to get the drop on any other tramp who might attempt to take forcible possession of his worldly goods.

An hour later he met another Yankee tin-peddler on the road, and the man pulled up for a talk or a trade, he didn't mind which.

"Hello, ycung feller, where yer bound?" was his first salutation.

"Well, nowhere," said Joseph, pulling up.

"Wal, yer'll find it all long on this ere road, for it's ther pizenest, dullest country in the world."

"Well, this is the dull season of the year."

"I should say so, by thunder. Can't even buy paper rags, things is so dull. Whar yer come from?"

"Way back."

"How's things that way?"

"Dull."

"I s'pect so, dullern' an old hoe. Say, that yure hoss?" he asked, and, indeed, his eyes had been on Bob from the first.

"Yes, it's my property."

"How old is he?"

"Give it up."

"What!"

"Older than I am," said Joseph, laughing.

"Yer don't say! Got any go in him?"

"Oh, a little."

"Wal, he looks a little spry for an old 'un," mused the peddler.

"You may overtake a tramp further on, and he can tell you whether he has got any go in him or not," replied Joseph, laughing.

"How 'll yu swap?"

"Oh, I don't want to swap. Bob and I are old friends, and we don't want to be separated—do we, Bob?"

The knowing old nag shook his head.

"Sorter trained, eh?"

"No, we were brought up together."

"Wal, say, can't we make a dicker? Trade is thundarin' dull. Say, I'll tell yer just what you want—a pail tu sling on the axletree of yur sulky tu water yer hoss, an' a dipper tu drink out on yuself. What say tu a dicker?"

It struck Joseph that a pail and dipper was just exactly what he wanted, for he often came across streams without being able to water his nag, and so he said he'd buy.

That Yankee was delighted. He leaped from his cart

and at once produced his wares. In fact, before he got through he not only convinced him that he needed a dipper and pail, but several other things, all of which amounted to two dollars.

Joseph handed him the money.

"What!" exclaimed the peddler, starting back.

"There's your money."

"Great jumping Jehosaphat!"

"What's the matter?"

"A cash trade?"

"Certainly."

"Two dollars in cash?"

"Yes, there it is."

"Youngster, that's more money than I have seen since I've been out this trip. I didn't know but yu had a lot of old hoss-shoes or somethin' that yer wanted tu dicker, but, lordy massy, clear money! Maybe yu're one of the Vanderbilt family."

"Oh, no."

"Wal, I reckon yu don't belong round these parts, anyhow. Du yu really mean it?"

"To be sure I do," said Joseph, laughing.

"Wal, I'll be hornswaggled! Much obliged," said he, looking at both sides of the bill. "Wal, b'gosh, trade's pickin' up. Good-bye," said he, remounting his box, and looking our hero all over. He added: "Yu're a good one," and then jerked the reins to inform his sleepy old horse that it was time to move on again.

"Good-bye," said Joe.

"Good-bye," and the delighted peddler put string to his horse and the two separated.

Joseph meditated as he rode along, and gradually came to the conclusion that there was some money and a heap of fun in being a tin-peddler on the road.

He had a great love for studying characters, and he clearly understood that there was a greater variety to be found in such a calling than in almost any other.

He almost wished he was a tin-peddler.

At the next village he put up at the tavern, creating considerable excitement among the village bums and the habitudes of the place because of his queer turn-out.

It was generally thought that he was a jockey, and that poor old blind Bob was some celebrated trotter.

But Joseph paid very slight attention to the people in whom he had awakened so curious an interest, and after he had eaten supper he went out to the barn to see if Bob had fared as well.

He found several of the village gawks and jockeys there, looking at his sulky and studying the "points" of Bob, as they saw him, stern on, standing in his stall.

Making sure that his horse had been well attended to, he started to return to the tavern, at the same time understanding that there was a red-hot curiosity regarding Bob.

Finally an old fellow tackled him. He was the village oracle on horse-flesh, and had already dropped several mysterious hints about the strange horse.

"Say, young feller, yu don't mind givin' away tu me, du yu?" he began.

"Giving what away?" asked Joseph.

"Ther name of that ere trotter."

"Oh, no, certainly not. That's Bob."

"Yes, I understand. I'm fly, I'm a hoss man myself," said he, winking knowingly.

"What do you mean—that you are a horse-fly?"

"Oh, no, young feller, that's all right. I'm a jockey myself. I understand that you've got a big trotter there, an' it's only right that I should be posted. What's his real name?" he asked, in a confidential whisper, aside.

Joseph tumbled.

Joseph generally tumbled when there was any prospect of fun.

"Promise me you won't give it away?" he asked, taking him by the arm.

"Oh, I'll swear it," said the man.

"Because you see I'm only jogging him along to New York, and the boss would be as mad as thunder if he thought I gave the name away."

"Oh, yes, that's all right, I'll never breathe it."

"Sure?"

"I'll swear it."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Not after I have gone?"

"Never in the world."

"Well, then, I'll tell you," said Joseph, looking around, as though to make sure he would not be overheard, "J. I. C. See?"

"Great gosh an' thunder! You don't say so!"

"Fact! Hush!"

"That's all right. But I know'd it, I can tell a fast hoss at fust glance. So that is the celebrated J. I. C., is it?"

"Mind you don't give it away, now."

"Oh, that's all right," said the man, and together they entered the tavern.

Now, Joseph Jump knew enough of human nature to be certain that this horse gossip would give the whole thing away the very first opportunity he got, so he thought he'd watch him.

Nor did he have to watch long, for just as quick as he could, with decency, he got the landlord by the ear.

Joseph knew that he was telling him what he had found out about the celebrated trotter that was sheltered in his barn, for the landlord opened his eyes and looked at our hero.

Then there were mysterious glances between them, and finally the landlord took a lantern and sauntered out of the bar-room.

The secretive party soon followed him, and as there were several other horse-fies there, they sniffed something, and followed.

Joseph thought there might be fun in going out and listening where he could not be seen.

True enough, that horseman who had sworn not to betray the secret he thought he had wormed out of Joseph was giving it all away, and the excited company that had gathered around the stall where Bob was quietly standing, after having partaken of his supper, were talking about "J. I. C." in subdued tones, and going over his remarkable points by the light of the lantern.

Neither of them had ever seen the renowned trotter, but they thought they were seeing him then sure enough.

"Now, don't say a word, for the young feller gave it ter me on ther strict 'Q. T.,' and I wouldn't have him think I'd gone back on him."

"Oh, mum, of course," they all said.

"It's a big honor," said the landlord.

"Yes; but wouldn't you like to own the honor?" asked the very smart horseman.

"Oh, such a thing might be done," suggested another, and then there was some mysterious whispering between them, after which they all returned to the tavern.

"Well, what fools they must be! But I've no notion of letting them steal my old blind nag in mistake for 'J. I. C.' No—no; I'll stop that."

Joseph sauntered into the bar-room, and then things became quiet.

"Well, landlord," said Joe, "if you will lend me your lantern a few minutes I'll go out and see how my horse gets along, and then I'll go to bed, I guess."

"All right—there you are," replied the landlord, placing the lantern on the bar.

Joseph took it and started for the barn, and while he was gone the dishonest conspirators worked up their plans.

Joseph at once took measures.

Setting the lantern down where he thought it could not be seen from the house, he proceeded to take Bob from his stall and lead him carefully out behind the barn into an old unused shed, where he tied him.

Then he returned and took another horse that was something like his own in color and put him in Bob's stall, after which he returned to the bar-room, and finally went to bed.

The horse-thieves watched everything most attentively, and after Joseph had been gone about an hour they began operations, although, for fear of being seen, they concluded to work entirely in the dark.

The man who had wormed the secret out of Joseph, as he thought, appeared to be the most active of them all, and he it was who stole out to the barn to do the business.

Going into the barn, he quietly led the horse out of the stall, and slipping a bridle over his head as well as he could there in the dark, he walked him out of the barn, then mounted him and rode him slowly away in the darkness, while the other fellows nodded to each other, winked and then retired.

"J. I. C." had been stolen, and before morning would be secreted some place where the thieves could keep him and wait for a big reward.

Joseph Jump thought otherwise.

But he slept well, and did not wake up until the breakfast bell rang the next morning.

The landlord met him as he came down-stairs, and seemed very anxious about something.

"Somebody has stolen your horse," said he.

"What?" exclaimed Joseph, looking astonished.

"I am sorry to say it, but your horse is not in the stall, and somebody must have got in and stolen him during the night."

"Dear me, what shall I do?" said Joseph, in a sorrowful mood.

"I am very, very sorry, but——"

He was probably going on to say that he was not to

blame, but our hero cut him short by rushing out of doors toward the barn.

The landlord followed slowly, and by this time the other conspirators were there, and they were all wearing anxious looks.

"Ramson, your horse is gone, too," said one of them, addressing the landlord.

"Great thunder and blazes! you don't say so?" said he, which showed that he had not yet made a close examination of the stable, if, indeed, he had been there at all, being so certain that the great horse "J. I. C." had been stolen.

Like mad he rushed into the barn.

Joseph was not there; neither was his horse.

He tore around the place like one possessed of an evil spirit.

And while he was using all the strong language he could handle, Joseph Jump came around the corner of the barn, leading Bob by his halter.

That landlord and his companions started as though a ghost had confronted them.

"W—wa—where did you find him?" the landlord finally mustered courage to ask.

"Out here in the shed," replied Joseph, quickly.

"Thunder!" and they all said "thunder," and looked at each other in astonishment.

"Did—did——" and the landlord, without stopping to finish the question he was about to ask, rushed around the barn to the old shed, thinking, perhaps, that his own horse might be there.

But there was no trace of his animal to be found, and he returned wonderingly, as though to make sure that what he had seen was a reality.

There could be no doubt about it, for Joseph and his old blind nag stood there, while the poor fools of conspirators were gazing at him with open-eyed wonder.

"Is that your horse?" asked the landlord.

"Yes; he is a sort of a somnambulist."

"A what?"

"A sleep-walker, and he must have got out during the night and found his way out into the old shed."

"Thunder!"

They all said thunder in turn, but that was about all they did have to say. What they thought was a different thing, however.

"Why, that don't look like your horse," said the landlord, really not knowing what else to say, but wondering where his own horse could be.

"Yes, you are my horse, aren't you, Bob?" asked Joseph, patting his neck.

The intelligent beast bowed his head several times as though he understood the question.

"But he's foundered," said one of the men.

"I know it, but he don't mind a little thing like that. He's used to it," replied Joseph.

"And, by thunder, he's blind!" exclaimed the landlord, after looking him over.

"I know it."

"The devil you do!"

"To be sure. But Bob don't mind a little thing like that," said he, laughing.

Those foolish horse-thieves looked at each other, each trying to solve the mystery.

"But—but didn't you tell a man that he was the celebrated 'J. I. C.' last night?"

"Yes, but he's 'O. U. C.' this morning," said Joseph, laughing heartily. "The man was a fool, and would have some taffy, so I gave it to him, that's all."

"All!" growled the landlord, for by this time he had taken a tumble, as had the others.

The fool horse jockey who thought he knew so much had been duped by the clever boy, and had stolen the landlord's horse, with his consent, and ridden it away, thinking that he had a prize for which a big reward would be offered.

But just how it came about that Joseph's horse had been put into the old shed, and the fool had made the mistake of taking the landlord's horse instead, was what they could not well make out.

But Joseph led his horse into the stall gave him his breakfast, and then went to the house to get his own, after which he got into his sulky and rode away, leaving behind with a laugh the most silly lot of conspirators ever known.

"Ho, ho!" said Joe.

"Ah!" whined those left behind.

But Joseph had the best of that laugh, and he continued along the road behind old blind Bob, wearing an honestly earned seven-by-nine grin.

The laugh lasted him for several miles as he jogged along, but it did not last those conspirators one half so long.

Indeed, Joseph had scarcely got out of sight before they fell upon each other. They wanted to kill each other almost, and after accusing each other for some time of being stupid, they finally came to the conclusion to lay it all to old Hiram Champ, the fool who had run away with the landlord's horse, believing it to be "J. I. C," the famous trotter.

But there was only one thing to do, and that was to wait until Champ came back again, after finding out his mistake, as he surely must do before long, especially after daylight, that is, if he knew anything at all.

And yet this and they are only incidents and individuals appertaining to our story, so let us follow our hero, leaving those badly sold fools to get out of their snap as well as they may.

As said before, Joseph Jump snickered after leaving the tavern, and he went more than three miles before the laugh dwindled into a grin, and then the grin into a smile that lasted two or three miles further.

"Well, I wonder how they feel now? What do they think of 'J. I. C.' I wonder? That was the greatest sell I ever heard of," and then the smile developed into a grin, and finally the grin blossomed into a healthy, hearty laugh again.

Yes, it was all very well to laugh, but when he came to get right down to the realities of the situation, the world was yet before him, and he didn't know hardly how to grapple with it.

But he jogged along, at least Bob did, and after the grin accompanying the memory of what had recently transpired had faded entirely away, then he began to think seriously.

True, he did not know where he was going, and true it was he did not care.

But yet the responsibilities of the future would come up, in spite of his reckless, rollicking good nature.

He could not always go on this way, and if he would, poor old Bob could not hold out much longer, in the natural course of events, and then what would he do?

That was a conundrum that he was not able to wrestle with, so he began to think more seriously than ever before, only having eye enough for the present situation to keep his old nag in the middle of the road, and that without thinking where he was going.

"Hello!" somebody shouted, and that was the first thing that aroused him.

Joseph pulled the lines on Bob and looked behind him, from whence the call seemed to come.

"Say, what's the matter with you?"

There was a sportive-looking man behind him, in a light road-wagon, driving a fancy-looking horse, finely set out with harness and good grooming.

"Nothing the matter with *me*," said Joseph.

"Well, why don't you get out of the road and give people a chance?"

"All right," and Joseph drew aside.

The stranger trotted his horse alongside, and, pulling in a trifle, looked Joseph and his nag over contemptuously.

"Well, say, where did you collar that plug?"

"Oh, I found him," replied Joseph.

"Got him away from the crows, eh?"

"Oh, my plug is all right."

"Yes, he looks it. How long does it take him to go a mile?"

"Well, he'll get away with a mile pretty quick," and Joseph laughed.

"I should say so. Say, I'll bet you are a tramp, and have gone into partnership with that old castaway nag," and then the stranger laughed.

Then he touched up his spirited nag.

"Good-bye, sonny. I'm only going two miles beyond here, and I suppose you'll be along to-morrow sometime—if you have good luck."

"Well, perhaps," replied Joseph, quietly.

Now here was where a singularly funny incident transpired.

The man laughed "ha, ha!" and slightly urged his horse to continue his speedy and victorious career.

But for some reason or other he did not seem to gain on or get away from "the old plug" of which he had spoken so contemptuously.

It was sort of strange, to be sure, but naturally enough he concluded that his horse had not heard him or taken the hint.

So he chirruped to him again, and jerked the reins in such a way that there should be positively no misunderstanding, for he didn't want to be loafing alongside of that old crow-bait.

He really thought his horse took the hint and shot ahead, but somehow or other he didn't seem to leave the old plug behind any.

Then he got mad and pulled his whip on the animal, dosing him with it savagely.

And yet, in spite of the fact that his horse shot ahead furiously and at a big pace, as he knew, he saw that old plug still close alongside of him.

What in thunder did it mean?

He gave his horse another cut, and then looked at Joseph and his nag again.

There they were, and Joseph still wore a calm and placid smile.

The man began to get nervous.

Was he really in his right mind?

Was his horse going or standing stock-still?

He lashed him with the whip again, but still he couldn't shake or get away from that horrible old crow-bait.

And yet the old nag did not appear to be putting in any extra work, but for all that the worried horseman fancied that he was flinging those old gnarly shanks of his a little further and further ahead all the while.

One more cut with the whip, and that one in anger and desperation.

It was one too many, and the horse went up into the air on a bad break.

And while doing that bit of gymnastics Joseph and his unresplendent nag shot ahead.

"Good-bye, old man! I suppose I shall see you to-morrow or next day," said Joe, looking over his shoulder and calling to him.

"Thunder and——" and several other big words did Joseph hear, as the horseman was trying to get his animal down to work again.

But it was no use. Even when he did get him down to his level best, Joseph and his old blind plug kept away ahead of him with the greatest apparent ease.

The mad man became an astonished one.

"Say, hello!" he finally called, seeing that there was no hope of overtaking him.

"Hello yourself!" Joe called back.

"Pull up!"

"All right!" and in a moment the two horses were alongside of each other again.

"Say, my horse is a little nervous. Give me ten feet the start, and I'll bet you ten dollars to a dime you'll never catch me."

"All right; I'll go you. Get ahead."

The stranger trotted his horse about a rod in advance of the old plug that was making him so nervous, and then he put him down to work for all there was in him.

Joseph spoke to Bob, and again he began to fling those knotty old shanks of his.

In less than a quarter of a minute he shot by that "nervous" nag, for he proved to be about as nervous with Bob behind as before him.

"I'll take that ten dollars, if you please," said Joe.

"All right, here it is; but I'll bet you another ten that I beat you from here to the cross-roads yonder," said he, handing Joseph the money he had won.

"I'll have to go you," said our hero, smilingly.

And he did go him.

It was only about a quarter of a mile, anyhow, and Bob was good for that, although he probably did not have so much wind and bottom as the other horse had for a longer race.

But he ran right away from him, reaching the guidepost at the cross-roads fully three lengths ahead of the challenger and his "nervous" horse.

The man was all broken up.

"Ten dollars, please," said Joseph, smiling.

"There you are. But, say, where in Sheol did you get that horse?" asked the man.

"Oh, we were brought up together," said Joseph.

And Joseph looked very sober.

"The deuce you say! Well, say, what will you take for him?"

"Bob isn't for sale, mister."

"Oh, he isn't, hey? Get up!" he cried to his own horse, who quickly got down to business and worked up a fine pace.

But the same thing happened again.

The losing stranger whipped up his horse, but he somehow didn't seem to get ahead of the old nag any more than he did before.

In fact, the more the exasperated man lashed his horse, the more he didn't get ahead a foot beyond the old blind nag.

This thing was kept up for at least a mile, and yet Bob didn't seem to get excited at all, only he would occasionally fling out his scraggy hoofs about five feet at every stride, and that was what the matter was; that was why the racer didn't get ahead.

That horseman worked his nag for all he was worth again, and when he found it impossible to get ahead of the old blind nag, he got mad and wanted to fight.

This was on his way home.

He pulled up at a farm-house and called on Joseph to stop also, and he did so.

"Say, how will you swap?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm all right—I don't want to swap," said Joseph, and again he smiled.

"Where did you get him?" he asked, after he had walked around Bob and sized him up.

"I told you we were brought up together."

"Well, say, stop here to-night, will you? I want to know more of you and your nag."

"Well, I don't know," and the youth hesitated.

"It shan't cost you a cent."

"Well, all right, I don't mind."

The two horses were turned over to a couple of grooms for the usual treatment.

"I guess I'll take charge of Bob myself, if you have no objections. He is blind——"

"Blind!"

"As a bat, and isn't used to strangers much. So just show me the way and I'll attend to him."

"Great Moses! Blind?"

"As you can see."

The old horseman had not thought of such a thing, for the blinkers covered his eyes, and besides, he never would have believed that a blind horse could strike such a gait anyway.

So he examined him closely.

"It is a fact, by thunder. Well, well, I would have bet ten to one that his eyes were as good as his legs. How old is he?"

"Well, twenty at least; probably more."

"And homely!"

"Oh, Bob, isn't a beauty, by any means. He doesn't travel on his shape," said Joe, laughing.

"Well, I should say not! But come, I'll show you a stall for him," said the man, leading the way to a handsome stable where he had a fine lot of horses, of which he was naturally very proud.

Here Bob was given the best that the stable afforded, and after instructing the grooms further, he followed the proprietor into the house.

The evening meal was in waiting, and after a wash and a brush up Joseph was seated and given as good as his horse was receiving.

"Now tell me all about your old blind nag, for I have been a horseman all my life, and it has always been a chilly day when I have been left by anything that trots or runs around these parts, and naturally enough I am greatly interested in your old plug," said Mr. Bean, for that was the sporting farmer's name.

Thereupon Joseph Jump delivered to him a true, unvarnished tale, just as the reader knows it, and it proved very edifying to Mr. Bean.

"By thunder, young man, you had it right when you said you and he were brought up together, and it is the most real man and horse romance I ever heard in my life. I don't blame you for being very much attached to him, and I can see that there is a mutual feeling between you."

"I believe there is, sir."

"Perfectly natural. A horse is next to a man in intelligence, and some of them have a great deal more than some men. And his being blind only helps to concentrate his remaining faculties. By the great horn spoon, I would have given fifty good dollars to have seen him get away with that tramp."

"It was very funny for me, although I don't believe the tramp enjoyed it so very well," said Joe.

"Probably not. But I wish you did not think quite so much of him," said Mr. Bean.

"Why so?"

"Because I could get up a trade with you."

Joseph laughed at the man's lugubrious expression of face on such an occasion.

"You see I am rich enough to support my inclinations, and they run entirely to horses and to horse racing. But nobody loves fun better than I do. I am called a practical joker, and if I had that old blind nag of yours I think I could get solid chunks of fun out of him."

"I dare say you could, sir."

"I would take the best of care of him, and just lay for suckers."

"Lay for what?" asked Joseph.

"What we call suckers. That is, when a fellow thinks he has a horse that can beat the world, just worry the patience out of him by telling him that you have an old, blind nag that can beat the plum duff out of him. Then, of course, he will bet when you get him mad enough, and there you are."

"Well, it certainly would be lots of fun, but Bob might not do so well with you or anybody else as he does with me."

"Yes, there may be some danger of that; but kind treatment will soon win his confidence, and once anybody gets that, he will do his best. Now, I will tell you what I will do, Joe."

"Joseph, if it is all the same to you."

"What? Everybody calls Joseph 'Joe.' Why not ask me to call Bob Robert? But that is all right. Now, I will tell you what I'll do. I will give you a first-rate young horse, sound and kind every way, and fifty dollars for your old blind nag. Is it a go?"

"I really don't like to part with him, Mr. Bean," said Joseph, pathetically.

"But you will never have another such a chance," continued the horseman.

"I have never sought a chance."

"Oh, that's all right. I can't say that I blame you. In fact, I honor you for loving such a grand old nag in his homeliness and blindness; but you cannot possibly take such good care of him as he will receive here, and he, of course, will not live long, anyway. And when he dies, there you are, alone in the world, without a starter; whereas, if you have my young, handsome horse, and fifty dollars in your pocket, you can keep on swapping, if you like, getting boot or paying it, as the case may be, and eventually become rich and most likely a noted horseman like myself."

Joseph was silent.

Mr. Bean watched him closely, and at length thought he saw indications on his face of refusing the offer.

"Now, hang it, I'll go twenty-five better! I'll make it seventy-five dollars to boot. Now what do you say?"

"Well, one thing I must say, and that is that you are paying much more for my horse than he is really worth," said Joseph.

"I know it," said Mr. Bean, quickly.

"But at the same time it don't seem as though I can part with him."

"Oh, that is only a boyish sentiment. I want him just for my own amusement, or I would not make you such a liberal offer. I will see that he is taken good care of and is not overworked. And, confound it, whenever he gets so that I can have no more fun with him, I'll let you have him back again, and you can put him where he will die an easy, natural death."

"Well, it is bedtime now. Please show me to my room and I will give you my answer in the morning."

"All right."

And calling a servant, told him where to place his guest for the night.

Mr. Bean slept that night with a broad grin on his face, dreaming of the fun he could have with that terribly homely old blind nag, while Joseph revolved the thing sorrowfully in his mind, and finally fell asleep unhappy.

He knew very well that Mr. Bean had told the truth, and when he woke in the morning his mind was made up to accept his offer.

The bargain was soon completed, and in exchange for Bob Joseph received a handsome sorrel horse, worth at least two hundred dollars, and seventy-five dollars in cash.

After breakfast he set out sorrowfully on the road—to here in particular—with his new horse harnessed to the

old sulky, while Bean danced with delight as he saw him drive away.

"Fut ther divil is ther mather wid the ould man—has he gone crazy?" asked one of Mr. Bean's grooms of the other.

"Troth, I think he has gone off his nut entoirely," replied the other.

"Oi shud say so."

"Luk at his trade!"

"Is it a horse or an ould poine sthump?" asked the other, looking at Bob.

"An' he gives a first-rate one an' sivinty-foive dollars for him. Shure, his friends had bether luk afther him or he'll squander his fortune."

"Whist! here he comes."

This conversation had taken place in the stable just after Joseph drove away, and when their toss came out to gloat over his bargain they were both looking honest and doing their work.

"Boys, you wouldn't think to look at that old plug that he could out trot my Jim, would you?" he asked, pointing to Bob.

"Faith, an' I'd be surprised a turtle," said one.

"Do yees really mane it, Mr. Bean?"

"It is a fact. He did it yesterday with the greatest ease. But I only tell you this to show you that I am not such a fool as I might seem in making the trade. Keep it entirely to yourselves, or you will spoil all of my fun. But I want you to give him the best of care in every way. Fit that old harness to him, and have him ready for me to drive out in the red sulky at noon."

"All roight, sur."

Then the new owner of Bob went to his stall, where he caressed him and made himself agreeable in the fondest horse talk he could command.

"Sure, he's away gone," said one of the hostlers, after the boss had returned to the house.

"Divil a doubt av it, Moike; but it's none av our business."

"No, we must obey orders if we bust owners."

"But the oidea av that ould crow-bait beatin' Jim, the best trotter in the country!"

They both laughed and proceeded with their work.

But it is only a small portion of our story to deal with Mr. Bean, and so we will close with him for the present by saying that, after paying much attention to his new purchase, he finally won the old blind horse's confidence, and he began to feel, evidently, that he had found quite as good a friend as Joseph had been, and had struck even a softer snap than he had ever dreamed of.

Bean was very careful that none of his acquaintances should see his nag when he was speeding or even jogging him, for he thought that would take the edge off his racket.

So whenever he took him out he would allow him to walk (and Bob was anything but what might be termed a graceful walker), until he got off on a back road where he could have him all alone. Consequently, his two grooms knew nothing of what the blind horse could do, and more than ever did they believe that their boss had slid off his base, although he seemed to be level-headed and right-side-up in every other respect.

But Bean was satisfied, and when he came home, with

old Bob lifting up and putting down those big feet and knotty legs of his, he wore a grin so big that his hostlers and servants were not much to blame for believing him "off." Then he was ready to wait for the first sucker.

But, leaving him to enjoy his racket, let us follow our young friend, Joseph Jump.

The horse he had was really a beauty, and he soon found out that he was quite speedy, and although he would have been no match for Bob in a short, close brush, yet he had lots of bottom, and was in every respect as he had been warranted to be.

But, in spite of this, and the cash to boot he had received, Joseph was not happy. He felt as though he was leaving behind the best and possibly the only friend he had in the world.

He drove for nearly an hour through the next village, where he saw nothing worth stopping for, and on beyond it into the country southward—where he neither knew nor cared—before he met with any incident worth recording.

Then a horse-jockey pulled up and bantered him for a swap, his horse being very much older and inferior.

"How much boot will you take?" asked the man, after looking Joe's horse all over carefully.

This roused Joe, for now that he didn't have Bob, he cared little what he did.

"How is your horse?" he asked.

"Sound and kind—eight years old, warranted."

"Who by?" asked Joseph.

"By me—Sam Cooley—known everywhere."

"Well, I don't care much about swapping, but if I should I should want a hundred and fifty to boot," said the young horse-jockey.

"Whew!" and the other gave a prolonged whistle.

"All right!" and Joseph started his horse gently.

"Say—hold on!" and he wheeled his horse around.

"Let's see your nag get in some work."

"Come on, then!" and away they spurted down the road, Joseph keeping easily ahead, and each one watching the performance of the other's horse, jockey like.

"I'll give you a hundred to boot," said the man, after they had gone about a quarter of a mile.

"No—one fifty or no trade."

"I won't do it; it's too much."

"All right—no harm done. Good-day," said Joseph, calm as a summer's morning.

"Hold on! Make it a hundred and twenty-five."

"Nixey."

"Thirty-five."

"No."

"Well, you are the toughest customer I have met with in a week."

"That because I am not anxious, and probably you are; that's why I seem tough."

"All right, I'll do it. Unhitch, and here is your money," said he, counting out three "fifties."

Fifteen minutes afterward Joseph Jump was continuing his journey—somewhere—with money enough in his pocket to do considerable business, and although the horse he had received in exchange was not exactly a "spring chicken," or very handsome, yet he showed himself to be quite a horse.

That night he drew up at a tavern by the wayside, and engaged "refreshments for man and beast," for the night promised a storm, and he didn't want any of it.

The bar-room presented a cheerful sight, for there was a large wood-fire burning and flashing in the old-fashioned fire-place, and causing the shadows of coming night to dance most fantastically all over the room, and the smell of the cooking supper was enough to tempt a dyspeptic.

The landlord and three or four others sat around the fire, looking lazy and happy, and in a short time Joseph was made welcome and at home by the good-natured landlady who presided in the dining-room.

After supper he returned to the bar-room, where he found four or five others who had come in during his absence, and taking a seat near the fire, he soon found that he was in jolly company, for there was chaffing and stories, and a bowl of hot punch ready for customers.

And whenever a howl of the coming storm shook the windows, then there would be comments and weather prognostications enough to build an almanac of.

An hour or so passed in this way, and the company was quite the reverse to things outside, when the door opened, and two men well muffled up strode into the room.

Their coming would naturally cause a break in their joviality, but the strange way in which the new-comers scrutinized those present threw a positive chill over the company, which was only partially broken when the landlord rose and went behind the bar to serve the strangers.

One of them whispered to the landlord for two or three minutes, and then both stole glances at Joseph, although he took no notice of what was going on, being busy with his own thoughts awakened by the events of the day.

Then the strangers appeared to be making arrangements to stay all night, and the landlord seemed to understand everything.

The strangers were shown into the supper-room, and then the landlord took a lantern and went out to the barn, where he gave some orders to the hostler of a peculiar nature.

While this was going on the loungers and others were speculating as to what it all meant, none being able to do more than give a guess that failed to be generally satisfactory.

Then the landlord returned and spoke of its being a nasty night outside, and replaced the lantern on the bar, after which he walked over to the fire-place and rubbed his hands, at the same time glancing inquiringly at Joseph.

"Say, Mr. Tap, who are those two men?" asked one of the loungers.

"I don't know. Somebody from Tabbyton, I believe," replied the landlord, and this caused Joseph to look up, remembering that he had passed through Tabbyton not long before.

"Act sorter queer," remarked another.

"Oh, I don't know," replied the landlord, casting a glance at Joseph, who sat in the corner.

But he didn't care whether the strangers acted queer or not; they were nothing to him, and besides, he was getting sleepy.

Finally the strangers returned to the bar-room, bou

cigars, and took seats before the fire without saying a word, either to each other or to those who sat around, although their glances would occasionally steal over to Joseph's corner.

The landlord was busy up-stairs about something, and after three or four attempts on the part of the loungers to draw out the strangers, a dead silence fell upon the scene, giving more scope to the howling storm outside.

It became actually painful, and when the landlord returned Joseph said he would like to be shown to his room, so the landlord took up the candle again and beckoned him to follow.

Five minutes later he returned.

"All right?" asked one of the strangers.

"All right."

"Next to ours?"

The landlord nodded, and again there was silence and even more mystery for the loungers.

Finally the strangers were shown to bed, and the loungers began to get discouraged.

But when the landlord returned and took up his seat before the fire, they went for him, like men determined to conquer or die.

"Say, Tap, I don't like the looks of those men," said one of them, decidedly.

"You don't?"

"No, I don't."

"Nor I," said another.

"Oh, I guess they are all right," said Tap, at the same time poking the fire with the shovel.

"Well, I don't think so, and, what's more, I think they have designs on that young fellow."

"Oh, I guess not," and Tap smiled a sort of knowing smile, full of significance, or meant to be.

"I don't think they're any too good to rob him when he gets asleep."

"It is really too bad, gentlemen, that you cannot find out everybody's business. I really sympathize with you, and if you will come around to-morrow I will tell you all I know about the business."

This shot went home, and so did the loungers, each unsatisfied, but each having his own opinion.

Morning came, and the two strange men made themselves known to Joseph Jump as deputy-sheriffs, at the same time informing him that he was under arrest for horse-stealing.

Then the secret was out, and, although Joseph protested his innocence, he was taken into the carriage of one of the officers, while the other one rode behind in Joseph's sulky.

In vain he protested and tried to explain, they refused to listen to anything he had to say, and in the course of an hour he was in the jail at Tabbyton, the most sorrowful young mortal that ever was known.

Meantime, other officers had arrested Sam Cooley, the man with whom Joseph had swapped horses, and he was also locked up.

There had been several horses stolen in the neighborhood lately, and the officers had got on the track of Cooley and Joseph, several witnesses swearing that Cooley's horse belonged to Mr. Bean, and that of Joseph to Mr. Derby.

Cooley swore that he obtained the horse of Joseph Jump,

which he admitted, and then told the officers plumply that if they would take him to Mr. Bean he would show them that he had a right to sell the horse, and for fear of trouble they took him there.

"All wrong, gentlemen—all wrong. This young man is all right. I swapped horses with him, and he had a right to swap with anybody else," said Mr. Bean, after hearing the particulars of the case, and as he was a man whose word was to be taken, the officers weakened.

But they knew Cooley to be a horse-thief, and the owner of the horse that he had swapped on Joseph was red hot to prosecute him.

So Joseph was given back the horse he had got from Mr. Bean, and after the officers had apologized and treated him nicely, he was allowed to go with the money he had received in the trade.

It was an awkward scrape at best, but that evening the landlord, Mr. Tap, and his loungers, whom he had told all about it, were amazed at seeing Joseph drive up to the tavern again as bright as a trade dollar, but with a new horse.

If Dick Turpin had rode up and thrown the reins of his renowned Bess to the hostler, they could not have been more surprised.

"Why—you—you——" the landlord stammered.

"Oh, I am all right," said Joseph, quietly.

"But the—the——"

"Oh, that's all right, too. Set up some drink for your friends here, and I will tell you all about it," said he, laughing.

How quickly those friends understood that Joseph was a first-rate fellow!

And how attentively they listened as he told the story of that horse trade.

Ah! there is nothing like some little brown jug juice to make a story, a song, or a person interesting.

Then the landlord congratulated Joseph, and each one entered into a personal explanation of his feelings when he saw the two strangers. But, in truth, they all seemed to know that they were officers, and that it would turn out just as it had.

Then Joseph treated again, and became even more popular with all hands. So it is not to be wondered at that he found sympathy, and was a sort of a hero.

Well, the next day he was on the road again—that same road to somewhere.

But he was in excellent spirits, as was his horse, and together they flew along the road right merrily, for Joseph was one hundred and fifty dollars better off, even if he had been in prison.

The effect of this, however, was to learn him caution in swapping horses, and he concluded that it would be a cold day when he got caught again swapping horses with a horse-thief.

A mile or two from the tavern he met a man who was driving a horse strikingly like his own, which fact they both quickly saw, and instinctively almost they pulled up alongside of each other.

"Young man, where did you get that horse?" the stranger asked, after a moment's inspection.

"Traded with Mr. Bean for him," replied Joseph.

"The deuce you did!" and the man remembered how he had tried to buy that same horse once upon a time to make a match with his own.

"Yes, yes. Got the papers to show for it."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Trade him or——"

"Or what?"

"Find a mate for him," said artful Joseph, instantly, seeing what a valuable team the two animals would make, and thinking that probably the man would like to purchase.

"What would you do with such a team?" the man asked, looking rather contemptuously at the young jockey.

"Sell them for a big price, perhaps."

The stranger saw that Joseph understood what he was about.

"What will you take for the animal?" he finally asked.

"I don't know. What will you take for yours?" asked the youngster, brightly.

This rather stumped the man.

"Mine isn't for sale."

"Neither is mine," and Joseph pulled the reins.

"I'll give you two hundred dollars for him."

"Oh, no; not for Joseph. Oh, dear, no!"

"What?"

"Mine is as good a horse as yours, is he not?"

"Well, I—perhaps so."

"Will you take two hundred for yours? If so, here is your sugar."

Confound the fellow—he was a natural-born horse-jockey!

"No, I don't want to sell mine; but if you will take two hundred for yours I'll buy him for a mate."

"Funny, but we both have the same notions."

"Well, set your figure."

"Three hundred."

"Oh, thunder!"

"All right," and Joseph again acted as though he was going to drive along.

The man remembered that he had offered Mr. Bean three hundred for the horse six months before, but that eccentric horseman would never sell a horse.

"Won't you make it two fifty?"

"No, sir, for I don't propose to sell my horse for less than he is worth."

"Well, drive back here to the tavern and let me see how they travel together, and if everything is all straight, I'll give you the money," said the man, reluctantly.

"All right, sir," and Joseph wheeled his horse and headed him again for Tap's tavern.

It was indeed by chance a splendid match, and as the two horses trotted along side by side the stranger's eyes sparkled with delight.

Again was old Tap astonished at seeing Joseph return to his hostelry, in company with Judge Greenough, one of the wealthiest and best known men in the county.

"Here, Tap, have you a double harness that will fit these horses?" called the judge.

"I think so, sir."

"Well, I wish you would lend it to me, together with your double wagon, until to-morrow."

"With the greatest pleasure, Judge," and landlord Tapp bustled around with his hostler.

In the meantime the two horses were tied to the same post and left to get acquainted with each other, while Joseph and the Judge went into the bar-room, where the latter drew up a bill of sale, which Joseph signed, and thereupon received three new one hundred dollar bills, which he tucked out of sight.

"Now, be good enough to say nothing as to the amount I paid you, will you?" asked the Judge.

"Not a word, sir."

"If you please. Now let us see what Tap is doing," he added, and they went out of doors.

Tap, however, understood it at once, for he knew that the Judge was looking for a mate for his horse, and he was loud in his admiration of his undoubted success in doing so at last.

They were soon harnessed together, and as the Judge drove proudly away it could but be seen that the two horses acted together, as well as strongly resembling each other.

Joseph Jump now had his pockets full of money, but no horse, and this made him feel a trifle lonesome, for he began to understand that his future was mixed up with horses, and all the good fortune that had ever waited upon him in his life had been through old blind Bob.

The landlord tried to find out how much the Judge had paid him for the horse, but Joseph parried the question by asking him where he could buy another horse.

The landlord knew, but he was anxious to grease his fingers with a little of Joseph's money, and tried to get him to agree to remain at the tavern while he went and saw the man who owned the horse, assuring him that he could buy it of him much less than he could.

Joseph agreed to it, and Tap hurried off, leaving the tavern in charge of his wife and one of the loungers whom Joseph had treated, and as he again "fired another ball into him," he became very loquacious, informing Joseph about everything and everybody in the neighborhood, more especially about Joe Webber, the man that Tap had gone to see regarding the sale of his horse.

"Ah! speaking of the devil, by thunder, there he comes!" said the bummer, pointing to a man just then driving into the yard.

"I'll take a look at his horse," said Joe, walking out, followed by the bummer, who informed him that Tap had missed him because of having gone by another road.

That was good enough for Joseph, for, to tell the truth, he had but little faith in Tap, and thought he knew enough about horses to buy one.

So he looked Webber's horse over, and he soon found that he was willing to sell, being much more in want of money than a horse.

Inside of an hour Joseph had tried the horse, made a bargain, bought him, and was a mile away when Tap returned, he having traced Webber for several miles.

He espied the man sitting on the tavern stoop, thinking probably how he should get his wagon and harness home.

Tap beckoned to him energetically.

"Confound you, here I have been driving all over the country for you to do you a service," said he.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Tap."

"Oh, that be hanged! I have got a customer for your horse; only let me sell him, and all I get above seventy-five dollars is mine, eh?"

"I haven't any horse, Mr. Tap."

"What?"

"I just now sold him."

"Thunder and blazes! Who to?"

"A young man by the name of Joseph Jump."

"Great eel pots!" and the landlord fairly danced his anger on the ground.

It was only too true. Joseph's sulky was gone and Webber's wagon stood there horseless.

"I am very sorry, but——"

"Oh, my eye, Betty Martin! How much did you get for him?"

"Eighty-five dollars."

Then Tap was mad some more, and regarded himself as ten dollars out besides his trouble. What business had Webber to get ten dollars more for his horse than he had once offered to sell him for?

That was the way he looked at it, and he mopped his flushed face in red hot anger.

"All right. That is the last time I will ever try to do you a good turn," said he, and he marched into the bar-room, took a big horn of whisky, and then turned six quarts of water into the barrel, bound to get hunk somehow.

But Mr. Webber seemed to be satisfied, and so did Joseph Jump, for he soon found that he had bought a good young horse considerably less than his value, on account of the owner being in need of money.

So on he drove, merry as a lark, and before sunset had made forty odd miles, which brought him to the village of Oniontop, where he stopped at a tavern for the night.

Here he found several horsemen who had been to a horse race a few miles beyond, and who were stopping at the tavern for the night.

His new horse was not fast or fancy enough to attract much attention, but he had scarcely got unhitched before a man bantered him on his sulky, asking him how he would trade with his light box wagon.

Now Joseph wanted a wagon, and he knew that the horseman wanted a sulky, so he fought shy, but finally said he would give ten dollars boot.

The man kicked and Joseph took it quietly.

He said he'd be double blanked if he'd do it, and Joseph said he wasn't very anxious anyway.

Later on he said he'd take fifteen to boot, but Joseph still said he wasn't anxious; the sulky was good enough for him.

Then the man got mad and took the ten dollars.

Well, after supper all hands were gathered in the bar-room before the open fire, and very soon the horse talk began to flow lively, to which Joseph listened attentively, being naturally much interested in such things.

"Well," said one of the men who had been to the races, "that Bean takes the cake."

Joseph's eyes and ears opened.

"How?" asked the landlord.

"By taking it, that's how."

"I don't understand."

"Well, we didn't, but we do now."

"Tell us about it, will you?"

"Yes. You see Bean had a couple of trotters entered, and one of them got badly beaten, and the fellow who owned the winner had a great deal to say in the way of crowing over him. This made Bean mad, or at least he pretended to be, and finally he said: 'Your horse is no good, anyway. My horse was out of order or you never would have bested him.' At this the other fellow laughed, and said he would put up a thousand that he could beat any horse Bean owned. 'Why,' said Bean, 'I've got an old blind plug, twenty or not a day, that your horse can't beat,' and this, of course, created a big laugh. 'And,' continued Bean, taking out a fat pocket-book, 'I'll bet a thousand dollars you can't, and make play within ten minutes!' 'Oh, you can't bluff me,' said the other. 'Here is my money. Now see me win it, for whom the gods destroy they first make mad.' We all of us thought that it was only a little bluff on Bean's part, but in five minutes back he came upon the track, driving the worst-looking plug you ever set eyes on.

"A wild cheer went up, and the crowd gathered around to guy him and his nag, but he took some of the talk out of them by putting ten to five on his old crow-bait.

"Finally he sent them to score, after which he informed the crowd regarding the conditions of the race, which was to be a single heat of one mile, for a purse of one thousand dollars.

"Well, you never saw so much excitement in all your life as there was when those two horses—one a beauty, and the other a caricature almost—came clawing down toward the judges' stand for the word. It was simply tremendous.

"'Go!' shouted the judge, and drivers and horses proceeded to get right down to business.

"It was the queerest sight I ever saw in my life, and it wasn't the first scrub race I had ever seen, either. For the first quarter they hung well together, greatly to the surprise of those who had been the loudest with their laughter and guying.

"But such a gait as that old horse had on was never seen before. He seemed to pick up those big hoofs of his and throw them about ten feet ahead of him, when another one was instantly ready to overlap it.

"Little by little he gained on the other horse, however, and at the half he was leading him by a length. At the three-quarters he seemed to be getting warmed up for business, coming down the homestretch like a frightened dromedary, and going under the wire in 2:18 1-2, beating the other horse by four good lengths.

"Such a cheer as went up was never heard on a race-course before. Every throat seemed to be worked by a pair of five-horse power lungs, and a rush was made for the old blind nag, and he was quickly surrounded; and, what was more, he had scarcely sweat a hair."

"Three cheers for old blind Bob!" cried Joseph Jump, leaping up and swinging his hat.

They all looked at him in surprise.

"What do you know about it?" asked the narrator.

"Were you there?" asked the landlord.

"No, sir, but I know Mr. Bean's old blind nag, Bob, for I used to own him," replied Joseph.

"You did?"

"You?"

"Bah!"

"What are you giving us, and how?"

"Truth, and giving it to you straight."

"Bah!" and nobody seemed to believe him.

"I'll bet any man here fifty dollars that I did, and leave it to Mr. Bean himself."

"Where did you get fifty dollars?" asked one of the horsemen, sneeringly.

"Never mind—I have got it; it is good—it is mine, and I'll put it up on what I say."

"I'll have to see that fifty, young fellow," said a betting man, who felt ugly over the losses he had made at the races, and thought he saw a chance to get at least partially even.

"There is my wax," he added, handing the fifty dollars to the landlord.

"And there is mine," said Joseph. "Now is there any other gentleman here that wants to go me fifty more?" he asked, turning around to the company.

This broke them all up.

They instantly suspected that they had found a sport, and that he might prove as much of a surprise to them as old blind Bob had.

So Joseph could get no more bets.

"Sorry to see you weaken, gentlemen, after all you have said, but I can stand it if you can," said he.

"Who are you?" demanded the landlord.

"Joseph Jump."

"From where?"

"Nowhere in particular."

"Where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular."

"What is your business?"

"Nothing in particular."

"What!"

"Oh, I trade horses sometimes," said Joseph, laughing.

"The devil you do!"

"Oh, yes, and manage to make a living at it."

As he said this the bar-room door opened, and who should stalk in but Mr. Bean.

Everybody knew and greeted him.

They laughed and shook hands with him.

"Hello, Joseph!" said he, espying the young man.

"How do you do, Mr. Bean?" and they shook hands cordially, while the gambler grew sick.

"By the way, landlord, it is rather dark and disagreeable outside to-night, and I guess I will stay with you," said he.

"Certainly—and your horses?"

"I have just turned them over to the hostlers."

"By the way, Mr. Bean, I hold a bet that you are to decide."

"Indeed—what is it?"

"Did this young fellow, Joe Jump, ever own that blind horse of yours that took the cake to-day at the races?"

"He did, and I got him by a swap."

"That settles it. Here you are, young man," said the landlord, handing Joseph the money.

"That's all right."

"What a blasted fool I am," said the loser. "That is the second time to-day that I have been dumped by that devilish old blind horse. I am sick;" and he looked it.

Mr. Bean and Joseph had a long talk, and Joseph was congratulated, after relating his experience since parting with Bob.

"Didn't I tell you so? Go ahead, my boy, and you'll soon be a rich man."

The next morning Joseph was out early to pay a visit to Bob.

The old blind nag knew his very footstep, it seemed, and when he spoke to him the poor old creature fairly danced in his stall.

"How are you, Bob, old fellow?" he asked, patting his neck and head affectionately. "Do they treat you first-rate?"

The old horse whinnied affirmatively.

"Well, they had better, or I shall come for you. You are the boss old nag of the world, and the man who has you now will take better care of you than I could, for he is better able to do so, but he cannot love you better. Be a good nag, Bob, and some day I will reclaim you."

The hostlers noticed that there were tears in his eyes when he left Bob's stall, and they thought the young fool was leaking because the horse was blind.

Paying his bill and taking leave of Mr. Bean, who was also on the point of going, Joseph jumped into his new box wagon and drove away, soon leaving Ontiontop on the road behind him.

An hour or so out of the village, he was just passing a farm-house, when a middle-aged woman came out and hailed him.

Joseph drew up at the front gate to see what she wanted of him.

"Say, goin' tu Biteoff?" she asked.

"Biteoff what?" he asked, not knowing that the next village beyond bore that eupheneous name. "I don't understand you, madam."

"Why, Biteoff—next village," said she.

"Oh," he answered, for until then he was in doubt whether or not she wasn't a lunatic.

"Yes. Goin'?"

"Well, I suppose so. Why?"

"Will you go to Jones' store, and buy me a quarter of Maccaboy snuff, a pound of mixed tea, an' five pounds of salt codfish, an' I'll send the eggs along tu pay for 'em?"

"I would be glad to accommodate you, madam, but I am not going to return," he said.

"You been't! Oh, pshaw! Who be you?"

"My name is Jump."

"Wal, that's a queer name. Whar you goin'?"

"Nowhere in particular."

"An' never comin' back?"

"Perhaps not."

"Wal, you must be a tramp."

"Well, not exactly, I hope."

"Say, whose hoss is that?"

"Mine."

"Maria, come here!" called a man's voice.

"Oh, you shut up!" she answered back. "Say, how will you swap with my old mare?"

"I guess I don't care about it," said Joseph, who had no idea of trading with a woman.

"She's a good one, I tell you."

"Then why do you wish to swap?"

"Want ter get bute."

"I never pay boot, madam."

"Why, you darned fool, my mare's got a colt! Think of that."

"Well, that would be a very good reason why I would not swap."

"Say, Maria, don't make a darned saphead of yourself," said her husband, approaching. "You are forever wantin' to swap somethin'."

"Wal, I only wish I could swap you for a yaller dog. I'd kill ther dog an' be a widder," said she, turning and facing him, fiercely.

"What will folks think, Maria?"

"No need tu ask those as knows yu."

"You are a fool."

"Clear out, or I'll fule yu."

"Go into the house."

"No, I won't. Yu git in or I'll skin yu!"

"No, you won't."

"What?" and she pounced upon him as a robin does upon a ground-worm.

Down they went on the grass together, striking, clawing, pulling hair and yelling, while the house-dog, evidently used to such encounters, came out, and after a few preliminary barks began to bite first one and then the other.

It was too much for Joseph, and so he drove away to let husband and wife have it out together.

It was something he had never witnessed before, but there were so many comic elements connected with it that he could not help laughing.

So he drove on until he reached Biteoff. But he found the village, or hamlet, consisted of only three or four dwellings, a store, a blacksmith's shop, together with a cobbler's shop and the post-office combined.

He only viewed it as he drove through, for there didn't seem to be life enough in the place to keep a yellow dog awake.

But only five miles beyond he came to Buckstown, where there seemed to be less sleepiness and more life, and at the neat-looking tavern he called to bait his horse and get a bite himself, also to get his bearings for future use.

The tavern was kept by a good-looking widow, who was very popular with customers, especially those of the male gender, and it was also quite a resort for genteel sporting men.

The Widow Bloom had a rare faculty of finding out all about those who patronized her, and doing so in a nice way. But, woman like, she would have sighed even to the losing of flesh had she failed to find out all about every person who came to her tavern.

And, naturally enough, she was not long in finding out all about Joseph Jump, and not only that, but she pretended to take quite an interest in him, claiming that her grandfather bore the name of Jump.

"And so you trade horses, do you?" she asked.

"Yes, whenever I can make anything by it."

"Have you made anything so far?"

"Oh, yes, I can't complain."

"Tell me, how much have you made?" she asked, in confidential tones.

"Oh, probably five hundred dollars."

She was opening Joseph like an oyster.

"Ah! you are a real Jump. They were always very smart. But what are you going to do with all the money you have made?"

"Make more."

"Good! Of course you will. I'll bet on you every time. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Only twenty! Heigho, they are all either too old or too young."

"All who?"

"All men worth having. Why, if you were only a few years older I would make love to you. You are just the style of a fellow I like."

Joseph blushed, but she didn't.

"How long are you going to stay here?"

"Oh, only long enough to bait and rest my horse. What place comes next?"

"Oh, a no-account place called Granville. But you don't want to stop there," said she.

"Why not?"

"Because there is no life there. Why, ten dollars would frighten the whole community. Stay here a few days, and I am sure you can find a plenty of chances to trade horses. I know all of the horsemen, and I'll put in a good word for you, for I like you, and I am sure you are a distant relative. Perhaps you are a near one, and while you are eating your dinner tell me all about yourself," said she, just as though he had not already done so.

And she went into the dining-room with him and superintended everything.

To tell the truth, Joseph was rather taken with the handsome widow, bashful though he was, and she pretended to be greatly interested in the story he told her of himself.

Then she capped the climax by assuring him, after she had figured it out mentally, that they were undoubtedly cousins.

"Can it be possible?" asked Joseph.

"It is undoubtedly so, and now I am going to exercise a cousin's right and kiss you."

Joseph started as though a pin had suddenly been pushed up through the bottom of his chair.

She was standing behind his chair, and catching him around the neck, she bent his head backward and helped herself unhesitatingly.

"Now that settles it, Joseph, and you must remain here with me a few days, and I will take good care of you. Will you?"

Joseph hesitated in his blushes. He was half mad and all broken up, for it was the first time a woman, other than the one who bore him, had ever kissed him in his life.

"Promise me you will, and I will kiss you again," said she, coaxingly.

"Well, I——"

"Oh, I won't have any excuses. Say you will."

"Well, I will stay until to-morrow, at all events," said he, finally.

"Good!" and she kissed him again, according to promise, although he was not a party to it. "Oh, I will make it so pleasant for you, Cousin Joseph, that you will never want to go."

Joseph smiled, and they returned to the bar-room, where she gave him a cigar.

Taking it, he excused himself, and went out on the porch to smoke—and to think.

Yes, especially to gain composure and to think.

"Now that may be all right, and she may be my cousin, but I never knew of cousins being quite so fresh as she is. She's nice, though, only a little too much so. I don't like to have women kiss me, relations or no relations, and I don't think it is right, anyhow. What do they want to be so fresh for?"

Then he thought some more. He thought how green he was to tell her that he had money, for now he remembered that she brightened up and looked twice as pretty as she did before he had given her this piece of information.

And he thought how different from the general run of things it was that a newly-discovered cousin should awaken so much enthusiasm, especially when they had never dreamed of each other's existence before.

Then he thought perhaps that it was all put on, and that he was being charmed by a siren on account of his money; that he might be robbed, and then he got nervous just a little, for he knew he was a sound sleeper, and that nothing short of a cannon discharged in his room would be likely to awaken him.

Then he thought he would make some excuse and get away from the place. But that would be unmanly, after he had given a lady his word that he would remain, and so he thought of what other thing he could do for security.

A thought finally struck him, and he felt quite easy when the charming hostess came out to join him, and he felt more like chatting with her than before.

Presently other people drove up, to some of whom she introduced Joseph as her cousin, and all that afternoon she and others made it very pleasant for him, so much so that he nearly forgot himself.

Not quite, however, for in the evening, when he went out to a closet, he thrust a pin through some carefully folded bank-notes and fastened them with it to the underside of the seat out of sight, and where nobody but the person thus secreting them would ever think of looking for anything.

Then he took his knife and cut up some brown paper into strips about the size of bank-notes, and after folding them in the same way, he placed them carefully in his wallet.

During the evening there were several fellows present with whom the Widow Bloom seemed to be on first-rate terms, and several treats were extended to Joseph, although she would not allow of her relative treating in return.

And finding that he would drink nothing stronger than cider, she seemed to be afraid that he would not sleep well

with so much cold stuff on his stomach, so she put a little "hot drops" into it.

This she evidently knew would make her relation sleep well, and it did, although he never knew what time he commenced.

But we won't go into particulars.

It was quite late when Joseph woke the next morning, and it took him some time to pull himself together and commence where he left off last night.

But finally he got there, and the first thing he did was to look for his pocketbook.

It was missing, and then he knew what a great head he had in hiding his money.

He went down-stairs, where his cousin was awaiting him, all smiles and kind inquiries as to how he slept.

"Oh, all right, thank you, but I must go right away after breakfast," said he.

"Well, I am sorry, but if you must you must, I suppose. But you will come and see me again, won't you, Joseph?"

"Oh, certainly, I shall never forget how kind you have been to me."

"That's because I like you and we are relatives."

Joseph smiled to himself, and then asked her if she would be so kind as to have his horse hitched up, and of course she would.

Joseph finished his breakfast, and then went to the bank where he had deposited his money and found it all right.

Then he asked her how much his bill was, and she pretended to be real hurt to think he would even suspect that she would charge her cousin anything.

Joseph leaped into his wagon and took the reins.

"Good-bye, Joseph, come again," said the landlady, and she smiled on him, oh, so sweetly.

"Oh, certainly, or if I don't," he added, as he drove away, "you may keep my pocketbook to remember your dear cousin by," said he, laughing.

For an instant she was paralyzed, and then when he was out of sight she rushed up-stairs to where she had secreted something the night before and pulled out Joseph's pocket-book.

It only took an instant to open it, and another one to see that it contained only a bundle of cheap brown paper.

She uttered the wild exclamation, "Sold!" and fell back in a fit.

Joseph Jump felt of his boodle, touched up his horse, and drove along with a grin and triumph on his handsome face.

"I hope it will always be a colder day than this when I get left, and as for my loving and bewitching cousin, I am afraid she will not find enough in that old pocket-book to recompense her for her lavish entertainment and the large gobs of affection she squandered on me. But, come to think of it, she didn't expect anything from her cousin, oh, no. And of course she is not disappointed."

Before he really came to himself he had reached the town of Granville, which he found to be far ahead of what his bewitching cousin had painted it.

But there was nothing for him there, he felt certain, and he was on the point of leaving it, when a substantial old farmer, with a lame, but otherwise first-rate horse, hailed him.

He was a cute old cuss of the old horse-jockey school, and seeing a boyish-looking fellow driving a good-looking horse aroused his cupidity.

"Say, young fellow, whose horse is that?"

"Mine," replied Joseph.

"Sure of that?"

"Yes, sir. I can show a bill of sale."

"Wal, how will you swap?"

"But your horse is lame."

"Yes, just a little."

"I should say so."

"But he'll get over that."

"When?—when he dies?"

"Oh, no. Now, honest and square, how will you trade? Everybody knows me here and dozens of people know the horse. He has only been lame about three months. How will you trade?"

They were standing in front of a blacksmith's shop.

Joseph said he would ask the smith his opinion, and then he proceeded to do so.

"Did you ever shoe this horse?"

"No, old Bambrook there don't think I know how to shoe a horse, and so he gets Bill West to do it," said the smith, snappishly.

"Do you know the horse?"

"Not intimately. Guess he's about six years old, though."

"Yes, he'll be seven next May," said the owner.

Then Joseph went over the animal and took a careful survey of him.

He looked at the smith and got from him a knowing and encouraging wink.

"Well, sir, my horse is sound and kind, but I will swap with you for seventy-five dollars to boot," said Joseph, finishing his examination.

"Git out!" grunted Bambrook.

"All right," and Joseph got into his wagon.

"Wait a minnit—don't be so all-fired fast. Let me look at your nag."

"Go ahead."

And he looked in his mouth, felt of his joints, and finally concluded he would trade, both of them calling on the blacksmith to be witness.

The exchange was made according to agreement, and Bambrook drove away exultingly.

Joseph walked his new horse around and watched his limping carefully. It was in the nigh forefoot, and both he and the smith examined it.

"Bill West don't know how to shoe a horse for sour apples," said the smith.

"Think so?"

"I know so. He has lamed more than one good horse in this town. This is a first-class horse, and I'll bet he is the cause of his lameness."

"Pull off his shoes and let's see."

He led the horse into the smithy and in five minutes he was barefooted.

"There, I knew it," said the smith.

"What?"

"A nail in the quick. No wonder he was lame."

"Poor boy!" said Joe, patting the horse's neck, and, indeed, the animal seemed relieved.

"That was what the matter was, but that old fool didn't know enough to suspect it."

"Got a stall here?"

"Yes."

"Well, let him stand until morning to give his foot a rest, then put the best pair of shoes on him that you can make. I'll go to the tavern and be around in the morning."

"All right, and I'll bet you have got the best of the bargain," said the smith.

"I hope so."

Now this same smith had a chance not only to show what he could do, but one in which to get even with his rival, and that very afternoon, not having anything else to do, he went to work forging a set of fine shoes.

Joseph was at the shop betimes, and walked the horse around to see if he was less lame.

He was, and even after the smith had fitted him with new shoes he did not show his former lameness near so much.

"I told you so," said the shoer.

"And I guess you are right," said Joseph.

"Say, where are you going?"

"On to the next town."

"Oh, I'd give ten dollars, poor as I am, if you would drive over this town a few times, just to show what an ass that Bill West is, and let him and others see what good shoeing is."

"I would like to, but cannot. Here is a couple of dollars extra for your work, and if I can say a good word for you any time I will do so with pleasure."

An hour later Joseph was on the road again, allowing his horse to go as he pleased, without any urging at all; and at the next village, some five miles away, he put up for the day in order to give his animal a rest.

The next morning he seemed all right, and if he only remained so, he would be worth, at least, two hundred dollars.

And Joseph rejoiced.

He winked unto himself.

He was waxing rich, and the world was all before him as yet.

That day he got over eighteen miles, and didn't seem to mind it, but Joseph was careful, and finally, at the end of four or five days, his horse appeared as sound as a trade dollar.

He still headed South without thought or care, although there was something that somehow drew him toward New York—that same feeling that has drawn thousands there. So on he went.

The part of the country he was passing through now seemed to be infested with tramps, nearly all of whom were headed for the great city on which they live during the winter, like the social parasites they are.

He could scarcely go a mile without being importuned for a ride by some dirty rascal, and on several occasions had to depend upon his revolver to keep them from using actual force.

One day he had been especially troubled with them, and

he found several tough looking fellows hanging around the tavern where he concluded to put up for the night, some of whom were bold enough to demand a night's lodging, either in house or barn.

But the landlord and servants fought them off with the help of the dogs, and yet all felt that they were liable to do almost anything that was desperate in the way of robbery.

Joseph especially felt this. Although the armed hostler and the two dogs would keep the rascals away from the barn, yet he had a large sum of money on his person, and was naturally nervous.

Consequently, he did not sleep at all that night, but lay awake, with his revolver within reach, so as to be ready for anything that came along.

The night had shut in dark, but about one o'clock a partial moon arose, which did a little something toward lighting up the country.

Joseph could just see it on his uncurtained window. It was just light enough to make its outlines visible, and everything was silent about the place.

Finally he heard something outside, under his window, he thought, and, seizing his revolver, he sat up in his bed to await events.

It seemed an hour, but it was only ten minutes later, when he saw a man's head and shoulders' shadow upon his window.

His heart beat quick when he saw the robber slowly raise the sash; but he did not hesitate.

Taking deliberate aim, he fired.

In his little room the report sounded like a boiler explosion, rousing the entire household.

The sash was let fall with a bang, and that figure suddenly disappeared.

The landlord and his servants rushed to Joseph's room to see what had happened.

And while he was telling them they heard a fierce growling outside, accompanied by human yells.

The two dogs and the armed hostler had got that robber tramp, and the hostler didn't seem to be in much hurry to call off the dogs.

He probably thought they might save a cartridge.

But the landlord called them off and yanked the rascal to a perpendicular.

"Hold up your hands," said he.

"All right, boss; only keep those dogs off," said he.

But the dogs seemed anxious to take an early breakfast out of him while their master was tying his hands behind him.

They found a ladder at Joseph's window, from which the rascal had fallen at his fire.

They marched him into the bar-room, where the lights had already been lighted.

He was a rough-looking citizen, but Joseph instantly recognized him as the tramp who had attacked him on a former occasion, when old blind Bob took a hand in the game, and kicked him out of the sulky which he had coolly taken possession of at the point of a revolver, as also all the money that he had.

Joseph's bullet had given him a close call, so close that it had punched a hole in his ear larger than a pea, and cleanly cut.

"I'm bleedin'," he moaned.

"Yes, and it's a great pity that you are not liable to bleed enough for the good of society," said the landlord.

"But I war only tryin' ter find a place ter sleep."

"And you succeeded."

"And have a nice mark for life from the very pistol you once owned," said Joseph.

"What do you mean?"

"You robbed me once on the road, and would have succeeded in getting away with all my money, my horse and sulky, had not my old nag kicked you out of the seat you had usurped and landed you senseless in the road. I recovered my property, and took from you the pistol. Do you recognize it?" he asked, flourishing it under his nose.

"Curses on you!"

"But curses come home to roost, remember."

"You are a liar! I never attempted ter rob you or any body. I'm an honest man," protested he.

"Yes, you look it," said the landlord. "But I'll bet a thousand dollars that you'll be honest from this time forth, for a while, at least."

In the morning he was taken to jail, and, although the affair detained Joseph for two or three days, he had the satisfaction of seeing the rascal sent up for five years.

Well, let us skip along.

For the next month Joseph averaged a trade every day, until it got so he could hardly swear to his own horse.

But he managed to catch on every time, and now had over a thousand dollars which he had made in swapping and selling horses.

Indeed, he deposited a thousand dollars in a good savings bank, and then had enough about him to serve as a working capital.

Finally he reached the acme of his desires, and became the owner of a fine span of black horses, and a good-looking roadster which he led behind his fancy road wagon.

That was the horse he had either to sell or to swap, although he preferred swapping, because it left him a stock in trade all the while.

And, bless you, Joseph had by this time become quite a fashionable man as well as a sporting one, and but few men dressed better than he did, for he had learned his lesson as he went along.

He regarded his team as it stood as worth a thousand dollars, and few horsemen would have rated it lower than that figure, so well mated and such spry steppers were they.

We do not pause to record all of our hero's adventures, because so many of them were alike, but the reader can see that he was full of them.

One, however, that overtook him in New Jersey is worthy of notice, being out of the general run of incidents on the road.

He was skimming along the road one day behind his dashing team of blacks, with an extra or trading horse led by a halter, and doing his level best to keep up.

It was a lonely part of the country, where the houses did not average one in a mile.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and he had to make fifteen miles or more before he could reach a tavern.

While on the loneliest part of this lonely drive he came upon a little girl, apparently about ten years of age, walking along in his direction and evidently very tired if not footsore.

Joseph pulled up, and asked her if she did not want a ride.

She looked at him in a frightened sort of a way, but did not reply.

"Come, get up here, and I will give you a ride," he said, patting the vacant cushion with his hand.

The girl seemed to understand this, and he lent her a hand in lifting her into his wagon.

She was a pretty-faced child, but her clothes were rather shabby, but that made no difference to him.

"Are you going far—are you tired?" he asked, kindly, as he started up his horses again.

But she made no reply.

"Are you going far?" he again asked, and yet she made no reply.

But still she did not seem bashful, and when he nudged her for an answer to his question she looked up at him with a pair of large, beautiful eyes.

"Well, she is a queer piece," thought Joseph.

Then he nudged her again.

"Where do you live, little one?"

Again she looked up at him, poked her tongue out of her mouth, touched it, then touched her ears, and shook her head.

He understood it then.

She was deaf and dumb.

"Well, this is a fix. Wonder if she knows where she is going? Confound the luck. I may be taking her away from her home instead of to it."

Then he slowed up his team, took his note-book and pencil from his pocket, and handed them to her, asking her as well as he could to write something regarding herself.

But she shook her head, indicating that she could not write.

"Well, this becomes more and more interesting all the while. What the dickens shall I do with her?"

Then he observed her face, to see if she looked in any way familiar with the scene they were going over, but although the face was a very sweet, but dirty one, there was no indication on it that showed that she had ever seen her surroundings before.

"All right. I'll take her to Chunkychump with me if no one along the road claims her or she does not recognize any place as home. But I almost wish I hadn't taken her up."

The girl sat perfectly still, with her eyes fixed on the horses, although she would occasionally glance up at Joseph thankfully now and then, for several miles until they came to a farm house.

Here he stopped and pointed it to her.

She shook her head.

It was evident that she did not live there.

Where the deuce did she live, anyway?

Then he drove on again.

He only passed two more houses before he came to the

village of Chunkychump, but to both she shook her head, and he concluded that she must live in the village.

He arrived there about dark, but when the tavern hostler took the heads of the horses and Joseph attempted to assist her out, she drew back.

Then he beckoned her coaxingly, and finally lifted her forcibly from the wagon, the landlord looking on as though somewhat surprised at her crying.

"Don't she want to stop?" he asked.

"Hang me if I know what she wants," and then he told the story of his experience with her, and asked if anybody knew her.

Neither the landlord or his wife did, and after making many inquiries it was concluded that she did not reside in that village, and so Joseph gave her in charge of the landlady, offering to pay for her keep so long as he remained.

The poor child was hungry, and this made her more tractive, so, after getting a wash, she was given food, and was of course an object of interest. The story spread and dozens of people called to see her.

But there was trouble in store for Joseph on her account and for the kindness he had shown her.

The lonesome, unfortunate little waif would cry and point to Joseph, making all sorts of strange signs which were really indicative of her desire for him to continue the drive, but which were not so understood.

Finally, old Buck, the village constable, heard of the case and went to the tavern in the evening to see her.

Buck was very much of a Dogberry and thought he knew it all. He could also jump at some of the strangest and strongest conclusions imaginable.

"Young man, I arrest you," said he, after learning all he thought necessary, at the same time placing his hand on Joseph's shoulder.

"Arrest me!"

"Yes, sir, you are my prisoner."

"What for?"

"I arrest you for abberduction, sir," said he, with great pomposity.

"Abberduction! What the devil is that?"

"Stealing a corpus, sir, a body, sir; in short, a child, sir, an unfortunate deaf mute, sir."

"You be hanged!"

"I will not, sir, but I will see you jailed for abberduction, sir."

"I suppose you mean abduction, but I have abducted no one. I found the child on the road fifteen miles back, and took her up to give her a ride with the best intentions."

"Oh, of course you will make out a good story for yourself. But there is law, sir, there is law, and I am the embodiment of it, sir."

"Yes, you look it," said Joseph, at which the crowd standing around laughed.

"No sass, young man, or I will put another charge on you for contempt of the law," said he, savagely.

"I think you are mistaken, Mr. Buck," said the landlord, as the constable produced a pair of handcuffs.

"Beware, Mr. Uno, how you interfere with the majesty of the law. This young rascal is my prisoner, and I will permit no back talk from anybody."

"But won't you be reasonable?" asked Joseph.

"Sir, the law is stern. Come with me."

The deaf and dumb child was watching things, with her big liquid eyes wide open, and when Buck attempted to force the manacles on Joseph she rushed upon him with her little fists, indicating her resentment at the indignity upon her friend.

This created another sensation and a new sentiment in favor of our hero, although Buck would have it that she was mad at his prisoner.

"Don't you take him away; I will be responsible for him," said landlord Uno.

"The law, sir—the law!" yelled Buck.

"Well—well, do be reasonable."

"I'll tell you how to settle this thing. There is Mrs. Blanker, who knows how to talk the deaf and dumb language; send for her, and she can soon find out all about it," said one of the party.

This had not been thought of before, and a messenger was at once dispatched for the lady.

But Buck still kept a grip on Joseph.

In a few minutes the lady was there, and it only took a few signs to bring the poor waif to her.

The crowd gathered around to witness the silent sign language between the lady and the child, which lasted for at least ten minutes.

Then the lady turned to the assemblage.

"This child's name is Mary Stanton. She lives in Red Bank. She has been to the deaf and dumb school at Hooksockie, but becoming homesick, she ran away and started to make her way home on foot, when this young man took her up and brought her here, and she says he is very kind."

The cheer that went up knocked the majesty of the law right out of old Buck, and nearly broke his heart. The crowd guyed him so unmercifully that he was glad to escape, but at the same time threatening everybody with a dose of Jersey justice.

Joseph was of course liberated, and at once became a hero, and the little girl, after understanding the situation, insisted upon kissing him.

The landlady took charge of the waif, and she went to sleep, understanding that Joseph would take her home in the morning.

And this he did, as he was going to Red Bank, where he thought there would be a good chance to do some business, and he was well rewarded for his trouble.

The parents of the child were wealthy, and when she told them of her adventures and how friendly Joseph had acted, their gratitude was almost unbounded.

Indeed, the old man offered to swap horses with him.

Joseph swapped, you bet, for he never let a good chance go by, and he got another horse full as good as the one he had in tow and fifty dollars to boot.

Perhaps that was the way he took to reward our friend Joseph—who knows?

Some men would have given the girl to him in marriage when she got old enough, but this man was more practical.

Well, Joseph rather liked Red Bank. It is a very nice place, and he found a chance to put in some very fine work there and thereabouts, selling his span for eight hun-

dred dollars that had cost him only three in the way of swapping.

Then he went through the neighboring country, buying horses and selling or swapping them, until he gained the reputation of being one of the greatest horse sharps in the country.

And so he was. He was a natural horse-jockey and trader, and it only required a little experience to make him as sharp as a needle, and he made money "hand over fist," as the saying is.

Finally he bought horses in greater numbers, some of which he disposed of at the horse auction sales in New York, and others among the farmers.

But his greatest success was in training and handling horses, having somehow the faculty of making even a balky horse so ashamed of his conduct that he would get right down to business and give up his bad habits.

And he made lots of money by swapping good looking horses with farmers and others, taking handsome boot and then doctoring his exchanges.

In short, he became a boss horse-dealer, and invested in real estate. He bought a fine farm a short distance out of town, with large stabling and pasturing convenience, and soon had a herd of horses there of all sorts, speeds and ages.

But in the midst of all his success, Joseph Jump did not forget his old blind nag, Bob, who had been the means of starting him on a career of success, and his heart yearned for him.

It was now nearly four years since he had either seen or heard of him, but he remembered what Mr. Bean had said regarding him—that he would restore him to him after a certain time, that should be before his death.

So, after cogitating awhile, he made up a span of his finest horses—such as he knew any horseman would be delighted with—and set out through the country for New York State, intending to visit Mr. Bean and offer them to him for Bob.

It took him a week or more to drive there, and finally he got upon the road that took him past the place where he was born.

But strangers had it now, and there was scarcely a vestige left that had been endeared to his boyhood days, and he had changed so much, growing from boy to bearded man, that nobody knew him.

He stopped his flashy team at the old village cemetery gate and went to a pair of grass-grown graves.

There slept his father and mother. He sat down upon one of them, and for a moment gave way to the awakened emotions of his heart.

Slowly a shadow moved upon the other grave, and he looked up.

There stood the old sexton, leaning upon his earth-worn spade—the friend of his parents, the kind old man who had shed tears as he placed the cold earth upon their coffins.

The recognition was mutual.

"Joseph, I am glad to see you—glad to know that you have not forgotten the graves of your parents."

"And I never shall, Mr. Barbour. But I do not like this neglect. Let them be marked by the best stone that

this will buy," said he, opening his big pocket-book and handing him a five hundred dollar bill.

The old sexton nearly fainted.

He had never seen so much money in a single package before in his life.

"Use it, old friend, pay yourself and make this spot of earth as beautiful as is the memory which hallows it. In a year I will come again to see it."

"Dear, good boy! Heaven has prospered you," said he.

"Yes, greatly, and through what, think you?"

"I cannot even guess."

"Do you remember old blind Bob, the old horse my parents left behind them—the only thing that their creditors would not take?"

"Yes—yes, I do, but——"

"Blind Bob made my fortune. I am going to find him now, and, if possible, take him to my farm in New Jersey, where he shall live as long as possible and as happily."

"Joseph, you are a noble man. Heaven should be good to such as you, but I trust you will never get the gold fever as your poor parents did."

"No fear of that, Mr. Barbour. There is a plenty of gold on top of the earth without digging for it."

"Right you are. God bless you!" and after shaking hands, Joseph went back to his team and drove away, leaving the old sexton almost dazed.

Indeed, he kicked himself several times in order to make certain that he was not dreaming, and even then he was not certain, and so he started for home, clutching the five-hundred dollar bill, to consult his wife and have her tell him whether he was dreaming or not.

The road between there and Mr. Bean's was strewn with the scenes of the events in his humble career, and he could

not help calling at the house of the young lady whom he had rescued, and who insisted upon giving herself to him in payment.

She had forgotten all about him, and had given herself to some less fortunate man. But Joseph was satisfied.

Mr. Bean was delighted to see him, and he found that Bob was still able to eat his oats.

"I came to get him, Mr. Bean, and have brought you this pair of horses in exchange," said Joseph.

"Good boy! But first let me tell you of all the fun I have had with old Bob, and of the money I have won," said Mr. Bean, and a laughing hour at the supper table was spent in the relation of the incidents in which old Bob was the hero.

"Well, he has become so well known now that I can't get on to anybody, although I sometimes take him out on the road when he is feeling well and lay for suckers. But you may have him, Joseph. I have made fun and money enough out of him without taking the horses you bring in return for him. No, I give him to you, and long may you live together. He has made your fortune, as I told you he would, and he has made fun enough for me to last a lifetime."

Strange as it may appear, the old nag knew Joseph, and the meeting between them was of a nature to touch any sympathetic heart.

By careful stages Joseph took him to his elegant farm, where the softest bedded stall in winter and the richest clover in summer makes up the round of his declining days.

He is still living, and although Joseph Jump has become a wealthy horse owner, his entire stud is not so dear to his heart as is Bob, his old blind nag.

[THE END.]

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